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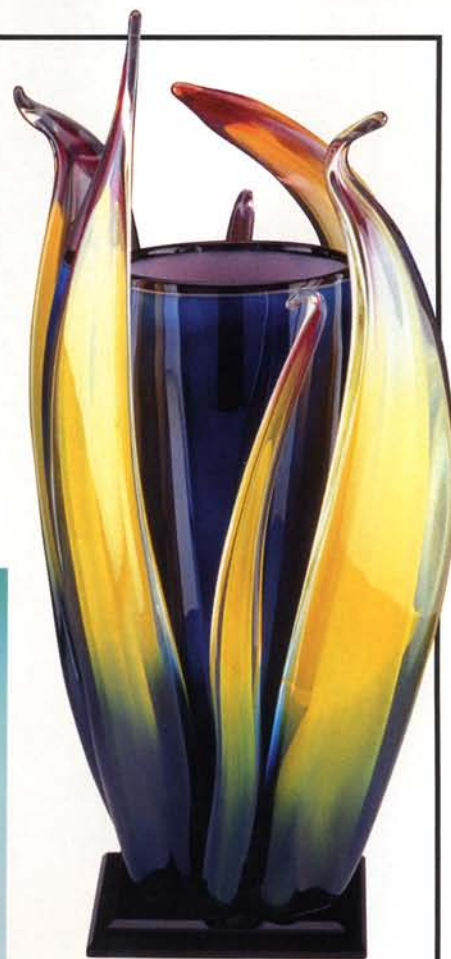
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This piece by Carolyn Morris Bach is part of the collection being auctioned off by CERF, page **33**



Previously known for his goblets, Randy Strong is gaining respect for his one-of-a-kind pieces, page **44**



Artist Gary Rosenthal is sharing the act of creation with a new generation, page **50**

OUTREACH

Doing Well & Doing Good

Artist Gary Rosenthal is making a new name for himself—social activist

BY MARILYN MILLSTONE

If Gary Rosenthal wrote a want ad about his Art as a Catalyst program, it might read something like this:

Successful artist/social activist seeks retail partners for innovative program that empowers the needy, strengthens community and increases your profitability.

Sound too good to be true? It's not: Rosenthal's program, which is based on his idea of using art as "an engine for social change," is now in its second successful year.

It's raised thousands of dollars for nonprofits including The Children's Inn at NIH in Bethesda, Md., and the Latin American Youth Center in Washington, D.C., taught jewelry-making to children with cancer, seniors in nursing homes, and various underprivileged populations; and proven a profitable venture for galleries in Washington, D.C., and Maryland.

The model, which Rosenthal says is replicable across the country, involves a



ALLISON SILBERBERG

Gary Rosenthal's Art as a Catalyst program has included the Hiddur Mitzvah Project in Minneapolis (left) and jewelry making at the Latin American Youth Center in Washington, D.C. (above).



four-fold collaboration: nonprofits that serve the needy, with constituents interested in learning jewelry-making; cor-

porate sponsors willing to donate supplies; retailers interested in showcasing and selling the jewelry, with a portion of the proceeds going back to the nonprofits; and Rosenthal and his staff, who supply the technical and artistic expertise.

But the renowned Judaica artist supplies something more: a passion for doing *mitzvahs*, Hebrew for "good deeds."

"My real interest is not in art or in crafts," says Rosenthal, briefly surveying

the activities of his bustling workshop in the unassuming warehouse district of Kensington, Md. "My real interest is in community service. I really see myself as a social activist who just happens to be an artist."

Philanthropy Equals Profitability

With an M.B.A. from the University of Virginia, Rosenthal is also a nuts-and-bolts businessman who keeps an eye on the bottom line—the bottom line being that cause-related marketing sells products.

"All things being equal," Rosenthal says, "the customer would rather buy a product that does some good."

Wendy Rukmini Walker, owner of As

Kindred Spirits, an upscale Maryland-based gallery that sells designer jewelry, wearable art and American craft, readily agrees. She sold glass Mother's Day pins and earrings, made through an Art as a Catalyst program at the nearby Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), in each of her three stores.

"I had them put right up by the register," Walker says. "The jewelry was very well received. It's a beautiful idea, and I think it has a real resonance for people. They liked that they were getting something for their mother and helping someone else out at the same time." Walker donated a portion of each sale to the LAYC.

Rosenthal is establishing a national network of gift retailers to contribute to his project through sales. In turn, the stores will profit from marketing benefits, press opportunities and referrals, he says.

Richard Barron, whose company, Central Wholesalers Inc., donated the money for supplies for the LAYC project, as well as for several other Art as a Catalyst projects, believes the program succeeds on several levels. "It helps people learn to help themselves, how to take care of themselves in the long run. And there's the community building—people from different backgrounds coming together," he



CAPTURED IMAGE STUDIO

Sisters Brenda (below, left) and Heyci Aviles were among the group making Mother's Day jewelry at the Latin American Youth Center. The finished products are pictured at left.

Rosenthal explains to the girls that the sheets of mosaic glass they are about to assemble will later be fused and cut at his studio, embossed in gold with the center's logo, and sold in stores to benefit the restoration of a LAYC-owned house for teenage Hispanic mothers and their children. Each girl will also receive a pin to give to her mother on Mother's Day.

"I often think about throwing a pebble into the water," Rosenthal tells them. "It makes rings. What do the rings turn into? In this case, they turn into profit—profit from the jewelry you're making, which will be used to buy furniture for the mothers' house. And more than that, if we can teach you how to become jewelry makers, it changes your life, too."

says. "Plus [there is] the use of the jewelry as a fundraiser for the nonprofit organization, so you have three things going on at once that are beneficial."

"The model of trying to give people dignity and teaching them personal responsibility—that really appeals to me."

Piecing It Together

On a rainy Saturday in April, Rosenthal meets a group of teenage girls gathered at the Latin American Youth Center in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, D.C., to make Mother's Day jewelry.



BILL PETER

Get Involved

Rosenthal is eager to help gallery owners across the country establish Art as a Catalyst programs in their communities. To learn more, contact him at:

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"It feels good [to do this] because you're giving something to your mom that you made with your own hands," says Brenda Aviles, 16, who hopes to become a pediatrician. "Yeah," chimes in her sister, Heyci, 14. "It's better than something you bought."

Surveying the teens, Lori Kaplan, executive director of the LAYC, smiles. "Gary has this vision for helping nonprofits," she says. "And it works." ■

Marilyn Millstone is a freelance writer in Kensington, Md.