

AMONG THE MANY PROFESSIONS available to men and women following World War II, the visual arts attracted a small number of Minnesotans. Two of these artists—Paul S. Kramer and Bettye Olson—are still active today and celebrating six decades of creativity. Both are represented in the Minnesota Historical Society's collection of fine art.

Born in North Dakota in 1919, Paul Kramer moved to Minnesota as a small child and always knew he wanted to be an artist. He got a jump-start on his career while serving in the air force from 1942 to 1945. As an armament specialist stationed in England, Paul—in his spare time—hand-lettered and painted images of pinup girls on the cowlings of bombers. Slogans like “Slick Chick,” and “Hard to Get,” make it easy to visualize the images that adorned these airplanes!

After the war, Kramer studied art on the G.I. Bill at institutions including the prestigious Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. In addition to his successful career as a painter, he was for many years director of exhibitions at the St. Paul Art Center and superintendent of fine arts at the Minnesota State Fair. He founded Kramer Galleries, Inc., currently located in Minneapolis.

Born in 1923, Bettye Olson was raised in south Minneapolis. She has vivid memories of tough times during the depression but felt that her family was luckier than most. Committed to becoming an artist, Bettye

studied art education at the University of Minnesota, receiving her degree shortly after VE Day in 1945. With fondness, she recalls pooling gas rationing cards so that she and friends could drive to the Stillwater art colony to paint and socialize under the watchful eye of Josephine Lutz Rollins. After the war, Bettye taught painting at the University of Minnesota—to veterans who were flooding the classrooms, thanks to the G.I. Bill.

Like most women of her generation, Betty spent the 1950s starting and raising a family. But she always found time to paint and exhibit her work. In 1964 she co-founded the West Lake Gallery in Minneapolis, one of the first women's art collectives in the country.

On behalf of the Minnesota Historical Society and citizens of Minnesota, thank you Paul Kramer and Bettye Olson for pursuing a career in the arts and enriching our lives.

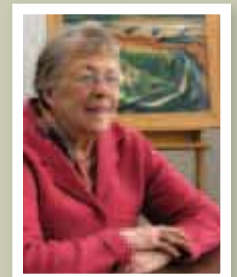
—*Brian Szott, curator of art*



Paul Kramer, *Self-Portrait*, 1964, oil on canvas, 30" × 25"



Paul Kramer, 2009



Bettye Olson, 2009

Bettye Olson, *Mendota Bridge and Church*, 1952, casein on board, 21" × 28"

