The Stable wasn't 'just another gallery'

by PAUL GARDNER

Eleanor Ward's Stable Gallery was an art world landmark spanning the advent of abstraction and the crackle of Pop. 'You realize today,' says one artist, 'that the Stable collected a who's going to be who in art'

IN THE EARLY 1950s, GENERAL interest in the avant-garde on the New York art scene extended not too much further than Picasso. The midtown galleries—there were only a dozen then, unlike the 65 or more today—stressed European art, for artistic innovation was still associated in the popular imagination with the School of Paris. Gradually, however, a handful of galleries devoted to new American art did open and turned the art world inside out. "Robustiousness is the typical tone of New York painting," wrote the late art historian Robert Goldwater, referring to the artists who would soon be collectively known as the New York School. To critic Irving Sandler, this predominantly abstract art showed "power, freshness, radicality and aspiration." It became, in his phrase, the "triumph of American painting."

The pioneering dealers who introduced these little-known or unknown American artists included Betty Parsons, the late Charles Egan and Tibor de Nagy, whose gallery director, John Bernard Myers (now retired), helped to shape the early careers of Larry Rivers and Helen Frankenthaler. But there was also another dealer, a vivid, sophisticated, commanding figure named Eleanor Ward. Her Stable Gallery, which first opened in 1953 in a converted West 58th Street stable, is acknowledged today by art historians, collectors and artists themselves as one of the prime forces behind the success of post-1945 American painting and sculpture.

Dorothy Beskind

Former dealer Eleanor Ward at one of her recent annual Christmas parties.

Throughout the 1950s, the Stable hosted what came to be known as the Stable Annuals. These were prestigious group shows, selected by artists themselves, that helped to consolidate the identity of the New York School. Having begun in 1951 in an East Ninth Street storefront, the annuals moved to the Stable in 1953, when Ward heard that the organizers were looking for a larger midtown space. Repeated until 1957, these exhibitions gave a new public prominence to artists such as Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Ad Reinhardt, Philip Guston, Jack Tworkov, Robert Rauschenberg and Richard Stankiewicz, among others. (In all, about 250 artists showed at least once in these exhibitions.) In his book *The New York School*, Sandler says, "The prestige of the Stable Annuals was dependent partly on the quality of the work shown, and partly on the fact that the selection was done entirely by artists—that is, by a committee chosen by all who had participated in the show the year before." The Museum of Modern Art closely followed the annuals and its own "New American Painting" exhibition of 1959 further established New York as the center of contemporary art. As the critic Clement Greenberg has written, the annuals exhibited "the liveliest tendencies within the mainstream of advanced painting and sculpture."

But the gallery's influence went far beyond the annuals. The Stable was the first New York gallery to show Andy Warhol, Cy Twombly and Robert Indiana. It helped fortify the reputations of Louise Bourgeois, Joseph Cornell, Marisol, Alex Katz, Isamu Noguchi, John Graham, Joan Mitchell, Alberto Burri and Conrad Marca-Relli. "You realize today," says Bourgeois, "that the

Stable collected a who's going to be who in art." It was also one of the few major galleries at the time to recognize photography, with a 1958 exhibition of the work of Hans Namuth. Other surprises for their day were exhibitions of Pre-Columbian sculpture and the musical notations of John Cage. "You were instantly noticed and remembered when you exhibited at the Stable," says Cage. "It wasn't just another gallery. It was a cultural center." Thomas Messer, the former director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, adds, "In the early days, Abstract Expressionism did not have the high museum polish it has now. So the Stable Annuals and Eleanor's own exhibitions often filled you with some doubt as to their validity, while always being very exciting. With hindsight, one realizes the Stable was a memorable gallery."

Equally memorable is Eleanor Ward. Mention her name today to senior members of the art world and they'll immediately exclaim, "*Eleanor Ward!*" in the sort of italicized voice usually reserved for the brilliant but somehow impossible legends of show business about whom there are endless stories and speculation. "Eleanor didn't simply run a gallery, she *reigned* at the Stable," recalls sculptor Richard Stankiewicz. "People toss around the word 'taste' a lot, until it's meaningless, corny," he adds, "but that's what she had a mile long. Her gift was finding totally unknown artists and perceiving their talents. It's an extraordinary gift." For critic Dore Ashton, "Eleanor injected the art scene, which sometimes seemed a little bland, with a great sense of urgency. Her decisions, at a key time in American art, made the Stable important." Indeed, when Ward first opened the Stable doors and took up "the cause," as she puts it, of the new painting, the established galleries, not to mention such influential media as *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine, were still clinging to the largely European past. Among the few champions of the New York School were critics Thomas Hess and Harold Rosenberg, writing in *ARTnews*, and Greenberg. "It wasn't an easy period for modern American art," Ward says, " a point so readily forgotten now."

For almost 20 years, the Stable Gallery, which spanned the advent of abstraction and the crackle of Pop, remained an art world landmark, even after moving from Seventh Avenue and 58th Street to an East Side townhouse. Then one day ten years ago, without any grand announcements, Ward abruptly posted a closing notice and disappeared. "It was very dramatic, but that was part of her mystique. It still is," says Stankiewicz. "I don't think the business detail, the administering of a gallery interested her. I'm sure the idea of being a *salesperson* appalled her. Eleanor lived for the art. Otherwise she'd still be dealing and the Stable would be one of the very top galleries today." After closing the gallery, Ward, who likes to travel, shut her eyes and "stuck a pin in a map; it hit Tangiers." She lived there for some months before quietly resettling in New York. She took a suite at the Volney, an elegant residence just off upper Madison Avenue, and, at least for a while, tried to maintain a distance from art—"a veiled distance," she says, "without a veil." Lately, however, private collectors have drawn Ward back into the art world by seeking her advice about acquisitions. Meanwhile, as the '50s and '60s recede and become the stuff of history books, young artists and scholars are asking older ones what the Stable was really like and why Ward withdrew.

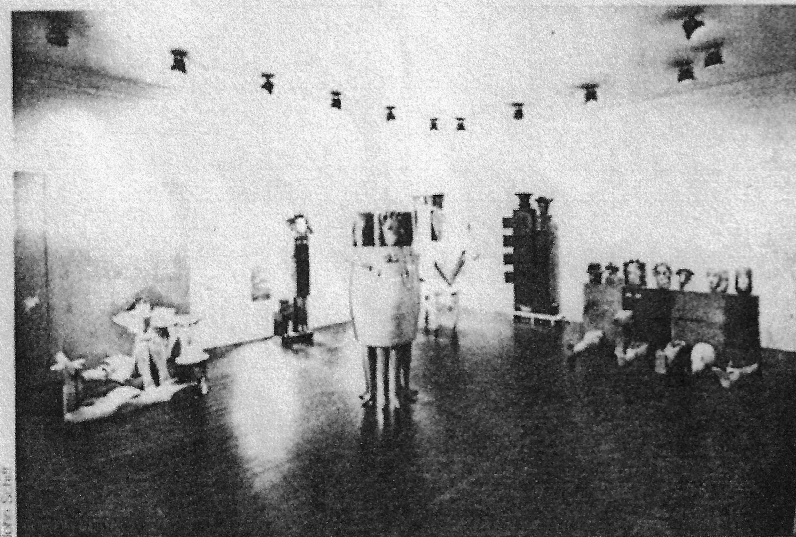
Reflecting on such questions, Ward reclines into a deep pillow on her huge white sofa and says, "I had the Stable for 20 years and I felt that was enough. It wasn't a Garbo act when I closed up, but I think the point *she* made is that you should know when to stop. Some people don't. They just go on and on. When I walk on 57th Street today I hear some people pass a gallery and groan, 'Is that dealer still open—oh, the poor thing!' I felt it wasn't for me anymore. The art world, by 1970, had gotten too commercial. Although some dealers may get a 'high' from their sales, that aspect was far less interesting to me than discovering new artists, selecting work and installing the show itself."

The black walls of Ward's Volney living room, marble-floored and filled with Italian antiques, are hung with works by her artists—Warhol, Twombly, Noguchi and Marca-Relli among them. The room is subtly, perfectly lit, almost like a stage set or a special gallery installation. Now in her 60s, Ward remains extremely elegant and cool, everyone's image of the grand mistress of a 19th-century Parisian salon. Her voice is still youthfully soft and feminine but always

Josef Levi's drawing *Still Life with Eleanor as Eleonore of France.* "You grew as a person when you were around Eleanor. You became aware of what lifestyle really means," Levi says.

John Schiff

When Ward offered Andy Warhol his first one-man show, in 1963, the Pop artist's response was a simple "Wow!" Above, a view of Warhol's 1964 installation at the Stable.



John Schiff

There were so many people at Marisol's 1962 exhibition, seen here, that they had to stand outside, says Ward, "as if we were some disco, waiting to get in."

politely *firm*. She plucks an almond from a crystal bowl and sips an amber drink from a tall glass with jagged ice. (The precise pyramid of nuts brings to mind a Wardian moment at one of her Christmas parties when she chillingly reprimanded an uninvited guest, "*You* are eating *all* the almonds," and then signaled the madrigal singers to sing on.) Stroking her Siamese cat, Peach, Ward says, "Perhaps the controversy surrounding Abstract Expressionism, and later Pop, made it easier to be memorable then. The abstract artists were rebelling against the social conformity and the split-level climate of the 1950s. Also, there were very few galleries then. Today wherever you move you literally bump into another new gallery. I hear gallery rental on West 57th Street is now about $8,000 a month, if you're just opening. When the Stable opened, my rent was $300 a month."

Easier or not, Ward, an upper-crust New Yorker who reminded many of a model or movie star, enjoyed provoking controversy while exercising a sensibility that made the Stable a veritable "cultural center" and hangout for artists, many not even in her "stable," who wanted a convivial and easy-going place to meet and talk. Dressed in stylish Dior suits, with cigarette in hand, Ward would listen avidly to these artists, usually grouped around a black marble Noguchi table, presiding over her gallery like a hostess at some fabulous party. Because Ward abhorred a commercial atmosphere, whether of the boutique or lofty-temple-of-art variety, the Stable was informal and welcoming. Says collector Vera List, "Today many galleries are so businesslike and high-pressured, with secretaries and nonstop phones. Eleanor created a warm place to enjoy art; it had the feeling of a magic clubhouse, if such a thing were to exist." Occupying a former stable where society folk once kept their horses, the gallery was a large, high-ceilinged, windowless space that exuded a pungent odor when spring rolled around. Ward's personalized office was a small windowless room painted black. Inside, the table and desk were stacked with photographs, negatives and often business letters that she found too boring to open. She preferred being in the gallery itself with the artists who, in turn, were drawn to her.

There are motherly dealers and fatherly dealers and others who are crisply efficient and reserved. Ward didn't fit into any of the recognized categories, which added to the Stable's mystique. As Pop sculptor Marisol told John Gruen in his memoir of the 1950s, *The Party's Over Now*, "Eleanor was very good to the artists because she really believed in them. She was the only person I could talk with in the years I showed with her. She could make me feel good when I felt nobody liked me." Stankiewicz adds, "You could sit and talk about anything personal and feel completely secure. If something troubled you that didn't have anything to do with art, she'd listen and want to help."

Alan Groh, then a young man from Virginia with a shrewd eye himself for art, became Ward's associate in the mid-'50s and was with her until the gallery closed in 1970. (Groh is now an independent art consultant.) He remembers the day he first showed up for a job:

"A tall, glamorous woman in a Dior suit advanced upon me. She didn't so much walk as gyrate. Her whole manner of approach was reminiscent. Everything about her was reminiscent. I didn't realize it at the time, but she was a composite of all the movie heroines of the 1940s. Now, having Katharine Hepburn, Greer Garson and Bette Davis, all of 'em, coming at you at one time—in an art gallery—is an intimidating yet oddly fantastic experience. The manner in which she held a cigarette, the way her eyes flashed, her smooth voice and most emphatically her walk were classic Hollywood, except this wasn't acting. I remember staring at that walk and thinking of Bette Davis in *Dark Victory*, when she announced she was going to live, live, live. She stopped, waited for me to say something. I blurted out, 'Uh, Miss Ward . . .' She interrupted me instantly with a puff of cigarette smoke—'*Mrs.* Ward.' Those were her first words to me. They weren't the last, however. We still talk on the phone every day."

Christian Dior, here with Ward in Paris, urged her to open a gallery. "You have the instinct, the taste and the eye," the designer told her. "Use them."

Then Groh adds ruefully, "Dealers traditionally don't have star quality. But that quality of hers attracted collectors in a day when most were still buying landscapes. And it added to the legend that grew up around her." Ward's artists, of course, watched with rapt fascinaton as she rebuffed would-be patrons wanting to buy art for decorative reasons. Everyone still agrees that she can give the word "hauteur" a new dimension.

Because of her unmistakable public image and seemingly invincible air, some art worlders once thought it would be fun to see if they could flap the unflappable. During the early 1960s Ward owned a country house in Connecticut and, one summer, she rented its guest house to painter Wynn Chamberlain, who invited her over for a party. As usual, Ward dressed meticulously. At the door she was greeted by Off-Off-Broadway actor Taylor Meade, dressed in a Chinese kimono. Meade, later to be the "superstar" clown of many an Andy Warhol epic, stared at her frostily and announced, "I'm Eleanor Ward. And who are *you*?" Ward turned sharply on her heel and never went back to the cottage again. Now she summers in Easthampton. "I'm tolerant of everything. You have to be, in the art world," Ward says. "But I've never seen anything humorous in camp. I always talked to my artists frankly about their sex life and their creative life . . ." Explaining her sense of the artist-dealer relationship, Ward adds: "I feel artists should only have shows when an outpouring of work demands that it be seen. I don't think work should be specifically 'created' to fill a booking one year away. That's why I always tried to keep my art calendar flexible. Alan Groh and I visited studios while work was in progress. Now one must be very careful with artists. You can't say bluntly, 'Well, that's not much good.' But you can't just passively *accept* everything either. So, Alan or I might say, very gently, 'Had you ever thought of doing this . . . or considering that? . . .' "

Paul Thek, one of whose environmental painting/sculptures was shown last summer at the Venice Biennale, recalls, "Eleanor had the ability to goad and inspire in the sweetest way. And how many dealers know how to inspire? She made instant decisions and she was always damn right." Artist Babe Shapiro says, "I went through a stylistic change and invited her down to my studio. I wanted a fall show. She told me, 'Babe, it's not quite *there* yet—but keep at it.' Most dealers don't have that daring, because they don't know! Eleanor dared. And she encouraged me. Well, I worked for several more months. Then, one day, she said, 'Babe, you got it. Let's talk about a show.' "

"The 20 years at the Stable were the most intense in my life," Ward says. "I've never discussed this with a psychiatrist, but maybe the intensity was too much and *that's* why I withdrew. I was not a dealer who simply received and exhibited. I was constantly searching. I was creatively involved with each artist."

Ward grew up on New York's upper East Side in a highly mannered society of debutantes and dowagers, international marriages and old families. For the over-cultivated and well-bred inhabitants of this Edith Whartonish world, the drawing room was a symbol of security—and not a little stultification. Ward's father, William Berry, was an architect, who often toted the young Eleanor around to openings at some of the day's more conservative galleries. As a child, all laced up, Ward was bored by the formality of these events, and even then, she says, she often thought it would be nice to own a gallery where people could relax and say whatever they wanted without pretense. She attended Bennett, an exclusive upstate New York junior college for women, where hours were spent "riding horses and learning French." Soon after graduation she was married to a stockbroker and then, equally briefly, to a Delaware lawyer. "I missed my independence," Ward says today of her marriages. Finding society unfulfilling and priggish, she ran away, like the willful debs in Philip Barry comedies and, in her late 20s, took a job in advertising. She later joined the promotion department of a fabric company. When designer Christian Dior, who revolutionized women's fashion after World War II with his "New Look," visited New York, Ward obtained a private interview with him, in French. Before long she was working with Dior in Paris.

Ironically, before turning to fashion, Dior had his own art gallery in pre-war Paris, where he showed the hallucinatory paintings of Salvador Dali, the designs for plays and ballets of Christian (Bébé) Bérard and the harlequin posters and portraits of novelist-filmmaker Jean Cocteau. Ward mingled easily in Dior's fashion-art-theatrical worlds, but spent much of her free time exploring the Paris galleries. "In New York I had seen shows at Betty Parsons and also at Charlie Egan's and Julien Levy's galleries.

and I realized that *we*—the Americans—were doing the new innovative art. I was restless and eager to get involved instantly." She had several art discussions with Dior, and, before she sailed back to New York in 1951, he urged her to open a gallery. "You have the instinct, the taste and the eye," Dior told Ward, words she etched in her memory. "These are gifts. Use them." So, after two marriages and two careers, she did.

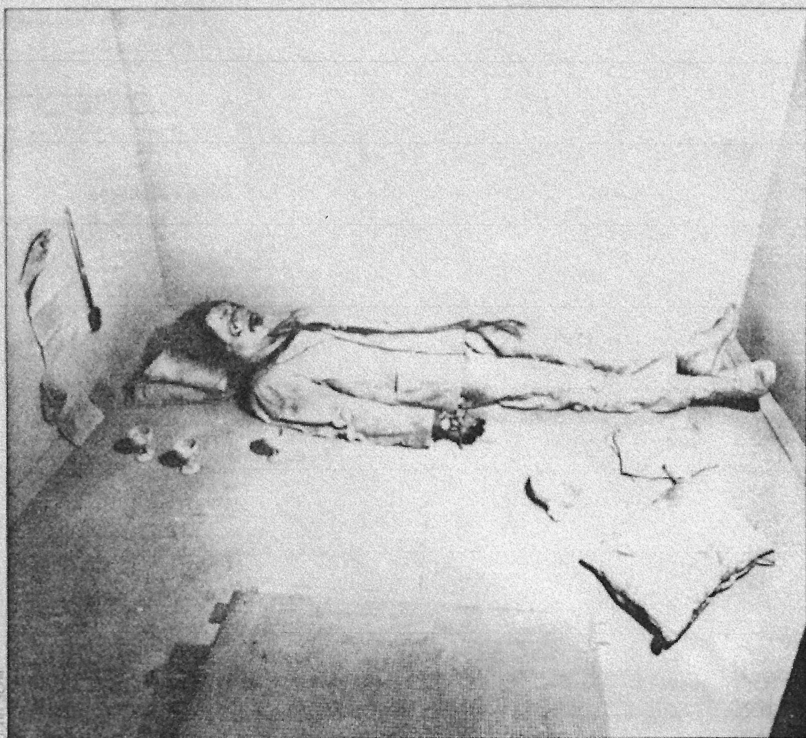
Ward proposed her gallery plan to a Wall Street broker who insisted on financing it. But once the Stable opened, the backer became cantankerous. He wanted to see luscious landscapes and picturesque scenes of the Grandma Moses sort. He had no sympathy for the New York School—"a lot of rubbish," he snorted, like a lot of other people. During the first seasons, in the early '50s, Ward's socialite friends stared with dismay at the collages on cardboard by Marca-Relli, the abstract canvases by James Brooks, the collages of charred sack cloth and blood-stained remnants by Burri and the monolithic marble pieces of Noguchi. Eventually relations with her backer fizzled, and when she bought him out five years after opening, artist Nick Carone and several others treated her to lunch. "We went to a delicatessen," Ward recalls, laughing. "I had a bagel and lox for the first time in my life. It was divine."

In the fall of 1953, Ward gave a two-man show to Robert Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly. Robert Coates, then critic for *The New Yorker*, walked in—and walked right out. The general reaction was "Eleanor has gone mad." Rauschenberg exhibited his all-white and all-black paintings; Twombly's work was based on graffiti. The show stirred talk, but not sales. Dorothy Miller, then senior curator at the Museum of Modern Art, took a stack of Twombly's pencil drawings back to the museum, says Ward, and urged friends to buy them as Christmas presents. They were $50 each, but there were no takers. Today Twombly drawings sell for about $10,000. "When I saw Twombly's work," says Ward, "it was the first time I was able to look at graffiti abstractly. He made it tender and poetic."

Rauschenberg, still in his 20s, was then employed as a janitor at the Stable. "He didn't have any money and pleaded with me to let him do something, even sweep up," Ward says. "I was leery about having a gallery artist work for me and told him so, but Bob was very sweet, and I finally agreed. However, I had to fire him. With a paint brush, he was magical. With a broom, he was lousy." Rauschenberg left the broom but took his art and later joined the Leo Castelli Gallery, which opened in 1957.

In 1958, eight of the season's ten best shows, according to an *ARTnews* poll of critics and writers, were at the Stable. Before long Nelson Rockefeller was telephoning for private viewings, because he didn't want to look at work while people were looking at him. "I remember one blustery winter morning," says Ward. "It was a frigid day and the city was knee-deep in snow. I trudged across Central Park in my boots—you couldn't get a taxi anywhere—to the old Stable. Everything was calm, beautiful. And totally silent. Not only were there no taxis, there was hardly a soul moving about. I opened the gallery minutes before ten. Turned on the lights. Turned on the heat. I shivered and wondered why I had even bothered to open the gallery on such a day. Amid the silence of New York, when there had just been a snowstorm, I heard a knock on the door. This may sound absurd, but I was frightened. I opened the door and there stood Nelson Rockefeller. In *his* boots. 'What are you doing here on a day like this?' I asked. 'We have an appointment, don't you remember?' he replied. He was there to see the James Brooks show. And he bought."

By the early 1960s, Pop art had exploded on the scene. The New York art world was aware of Andy Warhol, but dealers refused to show his work, still thinking of him as a commercial artist. Ward, however, had the courage to make a commitment. Confronted with a schedule change in her 1962 season, she made a list of possible artists to fill the open slot. She went to Warhol's studio and saw his painting of a hundred Coca-Cola bottles, his Marilyns and a red Elvis. The visit left her exhilarated. She couldn't sleep. The next day she telephoned Warhol.



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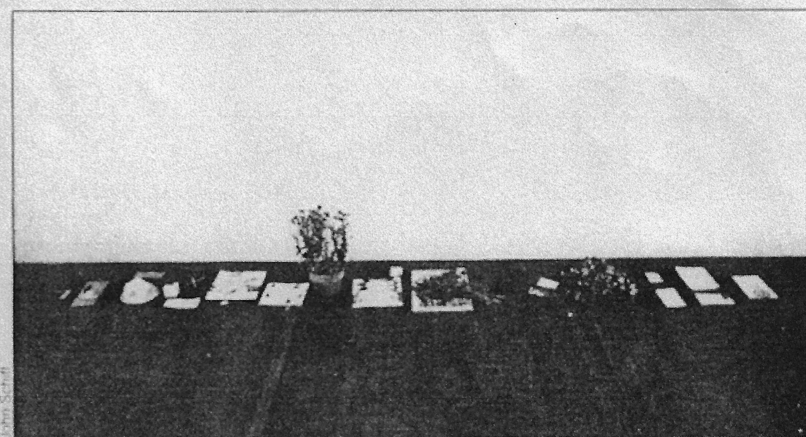

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The Stable presented Paul Thek's installation *Death of a Hippie* (top) in 1967. The corpse was made of wax but had real hair. Visitors spontaneously left offerings (above). Says Thek of Ward: "She gave me the kind of artistic freedom I've never had with any gallery."

"Andy, I want to give you a show," she said.

There was a slight pause at the other end of the line, then: "Wow!"

Ward pressed on. "I want it to be *this fall*."

"Wow!" Warhol said again.

The show was a sensation. "Here were the icons of popular culture," says Ward, "as we saw them in our everyday lives. Andy set before us the whole question of manufactured personalities, such as Monroe and Presley, and then he made us confront 'consumer society' with his soup cans and Coke bottles. He blatantly made us see the world in which we live." Today, Warhols cost up to $300,000. Eighteen years ago his prices were between $250 and $1,800.

The Venezuelan-born Marisol Escobar—Marisol—preceded Warhol at the Stable with two sell-out shows. "I was struck by her uncanny sense of character and wit," says Ward, "and her extraordinary ability to express this in wood and paint. Marisol satirizes the world. Social comment becomes art through her keen sense of observation and humor." Ward's own enthusiasm clearly affected Marisol's public welcome at the Stable. "There were so many people at her first show," recalls Ward, "that we had to lock the doors at the opening. People were standing outside, as if we were some disco, waiting to get in."

Throughout the 1960s, Ward continued to show abstract art, along with Pop and Op. Yet Ward did not talk about "selling" art, which smacked unpleasantly of commerce. Her former associate Groh says: "She repeated, 'I want the art *placed* with museums and perceptive collectors.' She didn't want it put on the block and 'sold' to just anyone. Eleanor used the word 'placed' instead of 'sold,' and what she meant was she didn't want the art acquired for status or decorative reasons by people with Muzak mentalities. It would do the artist no good. She wanted it acquired by collectors who were seriously committed to art."

Two acceptable and perceptive collectors who haunted the gallery were Arnold and Adele Maremont of Chicago. They kept eyeing the black marble Noguchi table. Ward thought they deserved to have the table "placed" with them, at a respectable price. She asked $3,000. But the Maremonts wavered. For months they wandered in and out of the gallery asking about the price, and each time it went up. After several months of indecision, the table, they discovered, was tabbed at $9,000. The Maremonts telephoned critic-curator Katharine Kuh, who said, "Buy now, it'll only keep going up." They did. (The table is now owned by the Maremonts' daughter, Madelon Falxa, who lives near Boston, and it is valued at $150,000.) Ward explains: "In terms of my 'sales technique'—and I find both words utterly offensive—nothing was ever preconceived. I made decisions instantly. The table was a magnificent and important piece, but the collectors only realized this when the price was raised. Now, let's not talk any more about money. It's only *paper*."

Ward never served liquor or wine at openings, but once the Stable moved to the upper East Side, she often gave buffet suppers for artists in her garden apartment, which was joined to the gallery by a spiral staircase. She served fresh salmon, imported cheeses, goose liver paté, strawberries and chilled white wine in ice buckets. Her bartender was borrowed from Lutece, the celebrated French restaurant. Joseph Levi, who first exhibited his Op art constructions at the Stable and recently did a portrait of Ward, says, "You grew as a person when you were around Eleanor. You became aware of what life-style really means."

Joseph Cornell, kindly, elusive and diffident, was one artist who kept to himself and his own life-style. The gray, slightly built Cornell, who was very possessive of his art, hoarded his box constructions of assembled objects and collaged images in Queens, where he lived with his mother and brother in a nondescript one-family house. Before his Stable shows, Ward would be given a preview at his home, but the boxes she saw were never the ones finally included in the show. He always held something back. "The trouble with Eleanor," he complained to Mark Rothko one day at the gallery, "is that she lets things get away from her." Ward says today, "I was never quite sure *what* he meant by that!" She was fascinated by Cornell. "His obsessive involvements with people, places and times he had never known were translated into a romantic world that only *he* knew and we were privileged to enter. Cornell—one of the great originals."

Since she always closed the gallery to all artists during installations, she once stunned the quiet, gentlemanly Cornell. "I painted the gallery black," Ward says, her eyes gleaming at the memory. "Then careful spotlights were hung, giving each Cornell box a shimmering glow. Afterwards, Cornell kept asking, 'You painted the gallery black for *me?*' He thought this was very audacious, and maybe it was. The response was wonderful and when the Metropolitan included him in its survey of the New York School, they did the same thing: painted the gallery black."

Marisol recently told a friend, "Eleanor knew how to create a sense of theater." Yet, in time, Marisol and Warhol drifted away to other galleries, and Ward felt bruised. She could not play "games" with her artists. "Games require big money, overseas connections," Ward says. "They'd be lured elsewhere with townhouse offers, lavish stipends, expensive gifts. . . ." But new faces were always opening the Stable doors.

In the mid-1960s a young artist named Paul Thek (now with Brooks Jackson Gallery Iolas) walked in with a painted piece of meat made out of wax. Thek says today, "I thought, 'Why not start right at the top?' I wanted someone with Eleanor's glamour and temperament. Also, the Stable was well known for having the best-installed shows in town. What a way it had for introducing a new artist."

Ward greeted Thek glacially and announced that she never looked at work when the artist was present. The next day, however, she woke him with an early phone call. "I want you to have a show as soon as possible," she told a sleepy Thek. He was broke at the time, and she advanced him some money "for a show in three months." Thek's major piece while at the Stable was *Death of a Hippie* (1967), later shown at the Whitney Museum as well as in England, Sweden, West Germany and the Netherlands. For this piece, which foreshadowed the end of the era of the flower children, Thek constructed a flesh-pink "tomb" that spectators entered to observe the "corpse" of a hippie made out of wax, but adorned with real hair and eyelashes. "She gave me the kind of artistic freedom I've never had with any gallery," Thek says of Ward. "The art world needs her. She should get back into tastemaking."

Hearing this suggestion, Ward strokes her cat and smiles. "I've done enough traveling. I *am* back, in a private way, as a consultant. Everyone says the '80s are going to be very exciting. I hope so." She points to a mountain of papers, books and notebooks. "I've pulled out everything from the past and I'm making notes for a memoir of the Stable years. Now that's a project!"

What of those years now stands out most vividly? "It's funny what leaps to mind," she says. "During the '50s every serious artist of the day exhibited in the Stable Annuals except two—Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still. They were much too insecure."

Does she have any regrets? "Yes, I'm sorry I didn't have an enormous apartment," she replies, with a laugh. "Jackson Pollock showed his *Blue Poles*, which was about 12 feet long, at the first Stable Annual. I loved the painting and wanted it very much. It was $3,000 and I knew I could get a discount. But there was simply no room in my apartment for this huge Pollock. I certainly wasn't going to buy it and then put it into storage. So, I was deprived of *Blue Poles*. Eventually it was acquired by the collector Ben Heller, who sold it in 1973 to the Australian National Gallery in Canberra for about $2 million." She bites an almond and sighs philosophically.

Several days later, Ward takes a fabled client, who wants her advice, to all the new shows on 57th Street, but it's not the Hollywood face the art regulars are looking at. In one gallery, for example, a collector stage-whispers to a companion, "Look! It's Eleanor Ward. *She* ran the Stable. . . ." ■