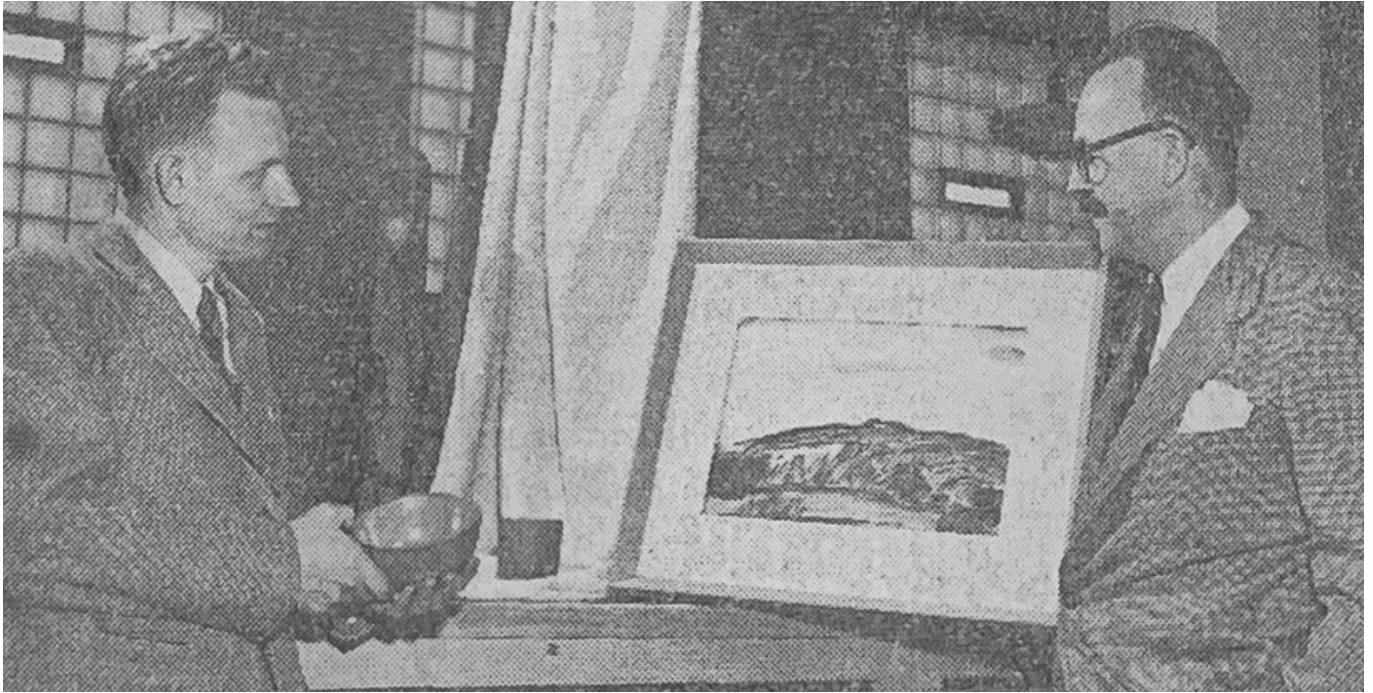


# EXHIBIT BACKGROUND



*The Artists of the Yakima Valley exhibition opened in May 1955. Larson Gallery Curator Gaylen Hansen (left) pictured with exhibitor Dr. Charles Hilton of Yakima Valley Junior College.*

**The Central Washington Artists' Exhibition** traces its roots to the spring of 1955, and the first in a series of exhibitions featuring "Artists of Yakima Valley." The local annual exhibitions were the brainchild of Yakima Valley Junior College art instructor and Larson Gallery director Gaylen Hansen. Hansen left Yakima to teach at Washington State University in 1957, becoming well-known for his raw neo-expressionist paintings of flora and fauna native to the rolling hills of Eastern Washington's Palouse landscape.

As the exhibition evolved, competitive awards were offered, and the area of eligibility expanded. The exhibition became known by its present title by a vote of the Larson Gallery Guild in 1958. The show's purchase awards have also played a key role in developing Larson Gallery's permanent collection of regional artworks.

A roster of guest jurors from diverse backgrounds keeps the show fresh. Pacific Northwest-based college professors, gallery owners, museum curators, and working artists (almost always from outside the eligible area) lend their expertise to curate unique exhibitions year after year. Notable past jurors include Roy De Forest, Ramona Solberg, Gandy Brodie, Ron Ho, Harold Balazs, and Alfredo Arreguín.