

Young at ART

By Max Lark

THE DAY BEGAN with an unexpected drizzle. But by late afternoon, when Imagineering Ambassador Marty Sklar and his wife, Leah, kindly opened the doors to their Los Angeles home for "An Affair of the Art," the clouds had lifted, stars began to dot the sky and the pleasant sounds of palm fronds shifting in the light breeze set the perfect mood for a special night.

"An Affair of the Art" is the annual charity event to benefit Ryman Arts, a foundation Marty and a small group of friends created to honor the memory of Disney Legend Herb Ryman, the man Marty calls "the patron saint of Disney artists." Held October 4, the event drew more than 350 art lovers who mingled, savored delicious hors d'oeuvres, sipped wine and, most of all, took advantage of a wonderful opportunity to look at more than 300 works of art from 60 top artists — including the work of 13 Imagineers and one from Executive Vice President and Executive Producer Don Hahn. Proceeds from purchases benefited Ryman Arts, an advanced

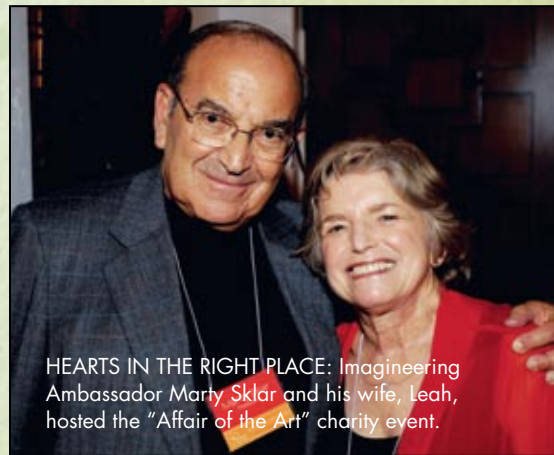
studio program for high school students in Southern California that provides free college-level art training — including brushes, canvases and paint — for high school students that otherwise might not get the chance to develop their talent.

"This program is so important and I'm so pleased that we've been able to do something to honor Herb Ryman," Marty, ever the gracious host, says. "We started with one class of 12 kids 19 years ago and this year we have every Saturday 150 talented young artists from 80 high schools in Southern California and there's another 150 or 200 kids we don't have room for."

Thanks to Ruth Weisberg, dean of University of Southern California's Roski School of Arts, all classes take place on the USC campus — a location that adds even more polish to an already shining example of philanthropy. "We're so fortunate to get connected to USC because those high school kids, when they get on a college campus, they know they have to compete at a different level," Marty

observes. "And all of a sudden the world changes and they know they have to do better."

Mark Kirkland, a director of *The Simpsons*, one of four artists to speak about the nexus of art and politics at a pre-event reception for Ryman Arts patrons, cheered Marty's and Ryman Arts' efforts. "What Marty and the patrons are doing here is really a great thing in helping young artists," he says. "Arts are often the first thing to go in a bad economy, and yet they are so needed for an enlightened society."



HEARTS IN THE RIGHT PLACE: Imagineering Ambassador Marty Sklar and his wife, Leah, hosted the "Affair of the Art" charity event.

For Marty, what's most important is to help give kids a chance they might not otherwise get. "The National Endowment for the Arts has helped us reach out to a lot of inner city high schools," he says. "For example, we had a young man from Guatemala at Belmont High School in Los Angeles who spoke no English. A teacher recognized his talent and got him into our program. And before he left high school he had a scholarship to an art school. After he graduated, he went back to Belmont to teach art. That is just so gratifying."

WHISTLE WHILE YOU SHOP: Proceeds from all art purchases support Ryman Arts, an advanced studio program for high school artists in Southern California.

