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The gift of art brightens Baier Hall

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THE GIFT OF ART BRIGHTENS BAIER HALL

LEFT: GEORGE STOHNER, HIS WIFE, ELLEN BOSHKOFF, KATHARINE BOSHKOFF, RUTH BOSHKOFF, AND DEAN PARRISH.

Doug Boshkoff knew immediately when he saw it. The oversized print on display at a Chicago art dealership was the perfect fit. Lichtenstein had used a neutral and cool palette and an angular design that would add a splash to even the dullest wall, and Boshkoff – a man of vision and creativity himself – knew that the Law School’s main lobby would serve as the perfect display space for the vivid print.

In September, the Boshkoff family attended the unveiling of “Imperfect Series,” a 1988 print by the American pop artist, which hangs just outside the entrance to the Jerome Hall Law Library. The print accentuates renovations to the main lobby that include new paint and more modern furniture.

“It was what he always wanted,” said Boshkoff’s widow, Ruth. Despite a great fondness for the print, the Boshkoff family – Ruth and their four daughters – knew Doug wouldn’t be happy unless the Lichtenstein was on full display for everyone to see.

And it’s the first thing you see when you now walk into Baier Hall.

“We were at an art dealer when we saw the prints [Lichtenstein did several in the ‘Imperfect Series’] and this was the one we both liked best,” Ruth said.

The print hung in the couple’s living room for more than two decades, but Doug made it abundantly clear it was to eventually end up at the school he led from 1971 through 1976. When he passed away in 2015, the Boshkoff family began making plans to donate the Lichtenstein to the Law School, meticulously ensuring the work would be cared for and visible for future generations to enjoy.

Art plays a major role in the Boshkoff family, from music to paintings. Ruth was a part-time church organist pursuing a Master’s degree in education in Buffalo when she was introduced to Doug by a mutual friend.

“He courted me by taking me to the complete Beethoven quartet and sang with me in a madrigal group,” Ruth recalled. “He took me to my first opera.”

And when the pair began scouring art exhibits and dealers, they would routinely end up picking out the same works, despite having viewed them independently. They amassed a collection that included pieces from the likes of Picasso, Calder, and Olitski, among others.

While those works have gone to family members or storage, the Lichtenstein is now publicly accessible, and will be for generations to come. Students whose eyes have been glued to casebooks for hours now have a bit of color and shape to break the monotony of otherwise plain walls.

Ruth Boshkoff sees the giant print hanging on the wall and has one thought. “Doug would be happy,” she said.