Artists often talk about starting their own galleries to display their work—but they seldom carry through. A group of 10 art faculty members at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette talked about it and did something about it—they formed the Libra Gallery of Fine Arts.

Ignatius "Buddy" D'Aquila, vice-president of the gallery, explained that it grew out of a discussion in the university cafeteria one day. "One student, not an art student, who is a real entrepreneur, suggested he manage the gallery if we ever got it started. We sort of forgot about it, but he brought it up later. We had a meeting, and everybody just assumed we would go through with the plan."

The student, Louis Staples, rents the old, tree-shaded house at 117 E. University. He lives in one half, and uses the other half for the gallery.

Libra Gallery opened in October, 1966, with about 300 visitors the first day. The inaugural show featured work of all 10 members.

"We're being realistic," D'Aquila said. "We don't expect to make a lot of money, nor do we have very lofty ambitions."

Left: Fred Packard is shown with his polymer and collage, "Red Table." Above: Teresa D'Aquila, 4, admires drawing near her head by her father, Ignatius "Buddy" D'Aquila. Other works are drawings by Fred Packard; paintings by Richard "Dutch" Kepler; redwood sculpture, "Nesting Tree," by Bob Wiggs; and a bronze by George Rowan.

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The Libra Gallery of Fine Arts is intended to provide a place for local artists to put their work before the public, to give the group of artists a sense of community, and to give art students at the university a place to see actual paintings and sculpture.

The members hope the enterprise will provide an artistic community spirit in which they will stimulate each other, said D'Aquila. Traditionally, artists who work together do better work.

Although the first show was a potpourri of work by all gallery members, subsequent offerings will be one- or two-man shows or will represent a particular theme or point of view, such as all prints and drawings or all landscapes.

"You can't grasp what an artist is doing without seeing a large body of his work at one time," D'Aquila commented.

Although the spotlight will be focused on the work of the gallery members most of the time, exhibits by outsiders will also be brought in.

The new gallery has two types of members: exhibitors and sponsors. Those in the latter category contribute funds to support the organization.

Not wanting to be just a place to look at or buy pictures, the gallery aims at broadening the perspective of the art patron and the art student through lectures and films on fine arts.

In addition to D'Aquila, the founders and members of Libra Gallery are Fred Packard, president; Allan Jones, secretary-treasurer; Richard "Dutch" Kepler, publicity; Elemore Morgan; Don Williams; Bill Moreland; Bob Wiggs; George Rowan and John Powell.

Wiggs and Rowan are the two sculptors in the group. Moreland is the chairman of the fine arts division of the USL School of Art and Architecture.

The gallery, which is incorporated, would welcome qualified artists into membership. D'Aquila said it was only proximity and coincidence that all the exhibitor members are faculty members.

The fledgling gallery's enthusiastic participants and location convenient to the university promise to make it a luminous point on Lafayette's cultural horizon.