

## Oldest Living American Artist Marks 109th Year At Whalen Fine Art

NEW YORK CITY — "I hope all these people are buying my art," said the celebrated Ashcan/American Modernist painter, Theresa Bernstein (1890- ) as she surveyed the jam-packed reception recently at Joan Whalen Fine Art. "Or else, what's the point?"

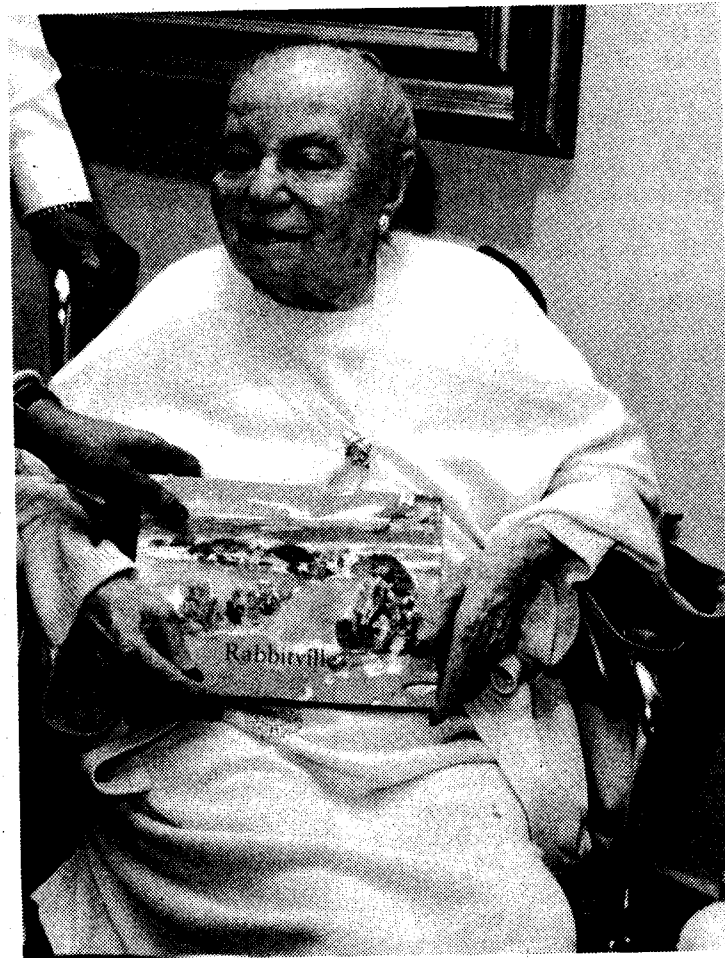
Looking radiant wearing a two-piece, yellow knit suit and perfectly manicured nails, Ms Bernstein was officially celebrating her 109th birthday, signing copies of her new illustrated book, *Rabbitville* and charming and hustling her admirers. Longtime friends and fans who had traveled from as far away as Washington, D.C. and Gloucester, MA to celebrate with Bernstein, enjoyed Joan Whalen's birthday exhibition of newly acquired works that demonstrate her vibrant expressionist style and enthusiasm for life, people and music. The Bernstein exhibition will run through April 30.

*Rabbitville*, Bernstein's sixth book, was begun 70 years ago in the form of stories the artist told to entertain young children who posed for her and was brought to life in a handsome volume compiled by her

devoted friends. *Rabbitville*, lavishly illustrated with Bernstein's sketches — Madame Tiptoe's ballet recital, Monsieur Palette painting the schoolteacher — is a "history" of rabbits who live in the burrows and fields of a peaceful valley. The vignettes are divided amongst the four seasons in a community where "enthusiasm, generosity and love make all the difference."

Bernstein also delights in telling real stories about such celebrated artists as Childe Hassam. During her solo exhibition at the Milch Gallery in 1919, Hassam lay drunk across the doorway to this important New York gallery. She ordered: "I don't care who he is; remove that body immediately."

According to Director Joan Whalen, this extraordinary artist was one of the youngest of the urban realists to embrace what was then a bold and modern subject — life as it appeared in the city's streets and public gathering places. Bernstein translated her love of humanity into scenes depicting the joys and trials of everyday life in New York City and Gloucester where she



Theresa Bernstein holding her new book, *Rabbitville*.

still keeps a summer home.

Born in Philadelphia in 1890, Bernstein showed early talent, enrolling in 1907 in the four-year Normal Art Course for training teachers at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women where she studied under Elliott Daingerfield, Daniel Garber, Harriet Sartain, Henry B Snell and Samuel Murray.

Later, she studied with William Merritt Chase at the Art Students League in New York City. In the 1920's, along with John Sloan, she helped form the Society of Independent Artists.

"Bernstein fans across the country have called, written, or come to New York to see our tribute to her career," Joan Whalen notes. She's now enjoying renewed public acclaim and critical attention and has established herself as a uniquely American Realist — a genre painter whose work spans the Twentieth Century.

Joan Whalen Fine Art, New York Gallery Building, 24 West 57th Street, is open Monday through Saturday, 10-6 pm. For more information, 212/397-9700.