

# American Women Artists

*Era Stanley, AWA Associate Member, 2007*

**American Women Artists** is a non-profit organization dedicated to the inspiration, celebration and encouragement of Women in the Arts.

*T*he Tucson Museum of Art organized the first AWA exhibit in 1990. Response to the exhibit was overwhelming and it became an annual show and sale for the next four years. In 1994 the group had outgrown its western origins and no longer fit the Tucson Museum's agenda, so the artists left the museum, agreeing to continue exhibiting together. In 1996, American Women Artists: A New Legacy, was featured at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson, WY. Local galleries supported exhibition by exhibiting works of currently represented AWA members.

*T*he first juried competition in 1997-1998 resulted in more than 500 entries. Awards of sponsored workshops, art materials and supplies, and cash awards were presented to fifteen artists. The scholarship finalists were also invited to exhibit with the American Women Artists at Trailside Gallery of Scottsdale, AZ in January of 1998.

*T*he second juried competition was hosted by Total Arts Gallery in Taos, NM in April 1999. In conjunction with the exhibit and in keeping with AWA's mission, a panel discussion on marketing art was held. Panelists included AWA members Star York and Donna Howell-Sickles. Awards and scholarships were given to twelve finalists and five semi-finalists.

*I*n 2000, AWA initiated the Festival of Women in the Arts in Santa Fe. The event featured the annual AWA membership show at Nedra Mateucci Fine Art Gallery and the competition exhibition at Contemporary Southwest Gallery. In addition to AWA events, the Festival acted as a platform for other galleries and studios to celebrate women in the arts with over 20 galleries and organizations participating in the first festival. 2000 also took AWA around the world, when AWA members and guest artists exhibited their work in Sorrento, Italy.

*T*he Festival of Women in the Arts continued in 2001 with the support of over 40 galleries and the Mayor of Santa Fe, New Mexico. It included women in all arts. On Saturday morning, AWA hosted panel discussions at the Museum of International Folk Art; the awards luncheon featured speaker was artist Judy Chicago. A fundraising gala held on Saturday evening closed out the weekend of events.

## *AWA Cont.*

*I*n 2003 the juried competition, member and invitational exhibitions were hosted by McLarry Fine Art in Santa Fe. In 2004, both McLarry Fine Art and Meyer Gallery in Santa Fe hosted the exhibitions. Over 40 artists exhibited these years with AWA Master Signature Members and 10 awards were presented. In 2004, the membership structure was expanded to a four-tier system to allow mentoring relationships to develop between members.

*T*he 2005 juried competition, invitational and master signature member show was hosted by Texas Art Gallery in Dallas, Texas. Exhibition dates were November 18 through January 3, 2006. A reception for all exhibiting artists and the public was held December 9, 2005. The weekend featured a panel discussion on the “Artist and Technology” and a portfolio review conducted by Master Signature and Signature members of AWA. The Women’s Museum in Dallas hosted all the educational events.

*A*WA is governed by the Master Signature Members and a five member executive board consisting of a President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer and board members. The group convenes at least once a year for a business and planning meeting.

*A*merican Women Artists is dedicated to the inspiration, celebration and encouragement of women in the visual arts. With membership of professional, acclaimed artists, AWA increases the public's awareness of women in the arts by exhibiting quality artwork in museums and galleries. And more importantly, all activities planned and presented by the group are the mission in action.