

# santa fean

December 09 / January 10

## Celebrate the City Different

Gifts Worth Giving, Celebrations Worth  
Celebrating, and Recipes Worth Sharing

**PLUS:** Telling Your Story Onstage • The Art of Collecting Art  
The Art of Getting Your Art Out There

[www.santafean.com](http://www.santafean.com)

\$4.95



0 72246 48125 7



# art patrón inc.

ARTWORKInternational helps artists advance their careers

By Devon Jackson



BEFORE SAMANTHA PAIGE FURGASON left her job as co-director of Santa Fe's Conlon-Siegal Gallery back in 1998, she discerned an opening, a gap, an opportunity. "I noticed there was this huge hole: Artists don't administer themselves," says Furgason, who's often mistaken—on occasion, adamantly—for Nicole Kidman. "I noticed nobody was doing that very essential in-between work." The kind of interstitial, sometimes thankless but always vital business work that's often the last thing an artist wants to spend time on—even artists savvy to the reality of today's do-it-yourself, promo-heavy, sell-sell-sell market.

Seizing her moment, Furgason took her last \$560 paycheck from Conlon-Siegal and founded ARTWORKInternational. Dedicated to creating a global presence for the visual artists it represents, Furgason modeled ARTWORK on the old-school art-patronage stylings of dealers such as New York's Leo Castelli (who was so essential to the careers of Jackson Pollock, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg) and her former boss and mentor, Bunny Conlon. "She was one of the last of the art patrons," says Furgason. "The type of gallery owner who'd help an artist build their career, even when it meant finding galleries for her artists in other cities."

A longtime Santa Fean (her mother is artist Colette Hosmer), Furgason, 39, has worked in galleries since she was 15. "My experiences here have everything to do with the inception of AI," says Furgason, a Cy Twombly fanatic who has collected art since her first gallery job. "Having grown up in Santa Fe, I've seen Northern New Mexico become a microcosm of the global art world."

Equally global in its scope and ambition, AI is neither a management firm nor an agency. ("We don't take a percentage; we work on an hourly rate," says Furgason. "And I'm not a deterrent at all, whereas agents are.") But it can resemble both in terms of its goals. "We grow artists' careers," explains Furgason. "We do career development. We find residencies for our artists in other countries. We seek out nonprofits, grants, we get our artists known, we do public exhibitions. We do everything except sell the art."

And they do it all anonymously. AI, consisting of Furgason and director Kathryn Crocker and two others, does not promote itself through its clients, and they work with only about a dozen artists at a time, as its aims are more long-term than quick-strike. "AI's clients are aware that it takes years to build a successful and broad art career," says Furgason. "We recently had a museum respond positively to a submission we sent them eight years ago, that only now resulted in an exhibition. And one of our other clients, who came to us years ago with only three pieces, he now has 23 galleries and has had six museum shows."

As AI client Stephen Katzman, a Florida-based photographer, put it, AI has "allowed me to concentrate solely on my artistic endeavors without the necessary distractions associated with career management. They create an environment that perpetuates inspiration born from trust and their understanding of this artist's needs and goals."

Other AI clients include artists who've taken part in the Chinese European Art Center (in Xiamen, China), French artist Mireille Vautier ("They approach their work very seriously," says Vautier, "and with a big energy"), and Santa Fean Christy Hengst. AI has helped Hengst land her site-specific installation *Bird Landings* project in nearly 40 locations around the world—including the Chartres Cathedral, Central Park, and the Galápagos Islands. "Working with ARTWORK," says Hengst, "I've enjoyed the feeling that a lot of behind-the-scenes work is getting done—things like publicity, funding requests—while I'm able to concentrate on the parts of my project that only I can do."

Top: Christy Hengst's *Birds in the Park*, a site-specific installation at France's Chartres Cathedral, porcelain with serigraphy on steel bases, 30-50 pieces, approx. 12 x 18 x 6" each; bottom: Stephen Katzman, *Multiple Millipedes*, archival pigment print, 42 x 83", edition of 5



Recently, AI announced the establishment of a \$12,000 privately funded grant. It's open to artists worldwide and accepting applications till the end of 2009. "Really," says Furgason, "it gives us the chance to canvass the globe about what's going on in the arts."

"Santa Fe is comfortable, and it's easy to be a big fish in a small pond here," she adds. "Things are foreign and scary in the big pond, but it's so worth jumping into—and to really do it you have to be OK with being the littlest fish. This is the way to learn how to swim."

Saturation—in every respect—is a problem when it comes to the larger art world, says Furgason. There's a flood of avenues for marketing one's work and there are thousands of artists for each art venue. "If only art patrons were growing as rapidly," she sighs. "So to make it as an artist today, you have to be excellent, you have to be dedicated, you have to be realistic. You have to be real, and then you have to get yourself in front of the right eyeballs." Which is where AI comes in. "The whole reason we're in business," says Furgason, smiling, "is to give the artist good news."



Mireille Vautier, *Plante Rose*, plastic bag and cotton thread, 8 x 8"