


AMERICAN
art
COLLECTOR

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Advocate for the Arts

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Christopher Owen Nelson, Coyote, carved painted and fired cast acrylic, 60 x 48". Courtesy Waxlander Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

2
Christopher Owen Nelson, Deep Roots, carved and painted cast acrylic installation, 224 x 200". Courtesy of a private corporation, Houston, Texas.

3
Mark Yale Harris, It's Mine, Italian translucent alabaster and Utah orange alabaster, 12 x 13 x 13". Private collection. Courtesy CANYON Fine Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The late Bunny Conlon was one of an historic group of woman gallery owners in Santa Fe, New Mexico, who helped put the city on the map as a locus for contemporary art. She owned three galleries here in the '80s and '90s. Samantha Furgason worked for her in all three locations. "She was my mentor, a true patron of the arts," Furgason remarks. Conlon's nurturing of her artists helped build their careers as she placed their art in museums and found representation for them in other cities and other countries.

Furgason began thinking of having her own business, one that provided the services for artists that she had learned under the tutelage of her mentor. Eighteen years ago she founded ARTWORKInternational, Inc. in Santa Fe and, today, is the agent for 18 established artists who are represented by galleries around the world.

She is quick to point out that ARTWORKInternational, Inc. was created "to address the need for development, management and promotion for visual artists and art-related businesses." The company doesn't sell art and is available to assist galleries representing its artists "in all areas related to the global promotion of our clients (a free service)."

SANTA FE-BASED
ARTWORKInternational, INC.
DEVELOPS, MANAGES AND
PROMOTES ARTISTS AND
ART-RELATED BUSINESSES.

BY JOHN O'HERN



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Dick Evans, *New Mexico Memory*, acrylic on clayboard panel, 30 x 30". Private collection. Courtesy The Howell Gallery of Fine Art, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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Mark Yale Harris, *Caught*, bronze, 5½ x 7 x 8"

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Susan Stamm Evans, *Quietude Series: Seated*, bronze, 26" high. Courtesy Selby Fleetwood Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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Mark Yale Harris, *Pecos Red*, Texas red sandstone, 26 x 36 x 12". Private collection. Courtesy CANYON Fine Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

"We started with eight artists," she explains. "As word got out, artists would say, 'If you're doing that, I'm in!'" In the beginning, her clients were both emerging and established artists. "Now we work only with established artists. As their careers grow," she says, "they need us more. In the first several years, I did tons of research. I continue to do global research on residencies, museum shows, anything that will help out clients' careers."

Some of the artists represented by ARTWORKInternational are anonymous. All of them, however, are people Furgason believes in and who believe in themselves as artists. "I believe in their work," she says, "and they believe in their own work, too. They have to create all the time and not be influenced by market trends or a particular audience."

One artist who has been with the company since the beginning is Mark Yale Harris. Sculptor Geoffrey Gorman, who had worked with another of Santa Fe's great gallery owners, the late Arlene LewAllen, recommended that Harris and Furgason get together to talk. Harris was co-founder of Red Roof Inns and spent his career in real estate development. "For his entire life he'd wanted to be an



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artist," Furgason explains. "In his late 50s he made the jump." Harris was befriended by two renowned sculptors who had been students of Allan Houser. Bill Prokopiou and Doug Hyde shared their wisdom and set him on his way "feverishly creating sculpture" as he says. Harris' figurative abstractions have been shown around the world, including the Royal Academy of Arts in London. Harris now lives and works in Carbondale, Colorado.

Furgason notes that Harris' work is represented by 18 galleries and has been in 30 museum exhibitions.

Christopher Owen Nelson is a younger artist represented by ARTWORKInternational. He lives in Boulder, Colorado. He has

always considered himself an artist and has always drawn and painted. After art school, however, he was working construction. One day, he recalls, he sat down at a building site and looked out over the mountains. He asked himself, "What am I doing? I'm an artist...I am an artist. I need to be painter. And that's it." His construction skills help him as he creates his art, relief carving the back of sheets of acrylic and painting, in effect, in reverse. His current work is portraits of trees—portraits in the way other artists paint portraits of people, celebrating their individual characteristics. His trees can be 4 by 5 feet or can be composed of individual panels to create an image nearly 18 feet square.

Nelson observes, "I try to address the spiritual and emotional impact that a particular tree has had on me by trying to understand its life, and by studying its characteristics and changes throughout the seasons, all the time asking myself, 'How are we connected?'"

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Susan Stamm Evans and Dick Evans are a couple, living and creating in Santa Fe. Dick was associate dean of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In 1987, both artists decided to return to New Mexico where they had been born.

Susan is a sculptor working with the figure. Her work ranges from intimate small figures interacting or alone to large anonymous fragments of faces. "Information is withheld," she says, "and there is an engaging mystery in that."

She explains, "I attempt to capture a single gesture or moment which will evoke a familiar personal emotional response in the viewer. I want to set a stage where the viewers are drawn in and create their own narrative. My work deals with the small, inward, everyday emotions because I feel it is in those that we all are the most connected."

Dick had been working primarily in ceramics until 1991 when he returned to his earlier love of painting. "I do abstract paintings," he says, "with lots of gesture and brushstroke and color, loosely based on landscape. They are explorations, interpretations and expressions of the world around me and within me...which are ultimately the same."

He hopes to encourage his viewers to experience their environment in a new way "by avoiding the visually expected" in his work.

Dick has been working with ARTWORKInternational for about nine months, having been on the waiting list for nearly two years.

Furgason's affection and admiration for the artists she represents is infectious. She and they share the sentiment of Paul Klee, "Art does not reproduce what we see; rather, it makes us see." The quotation appears at the end of all her correspondence. ●