

# SouthwestArt

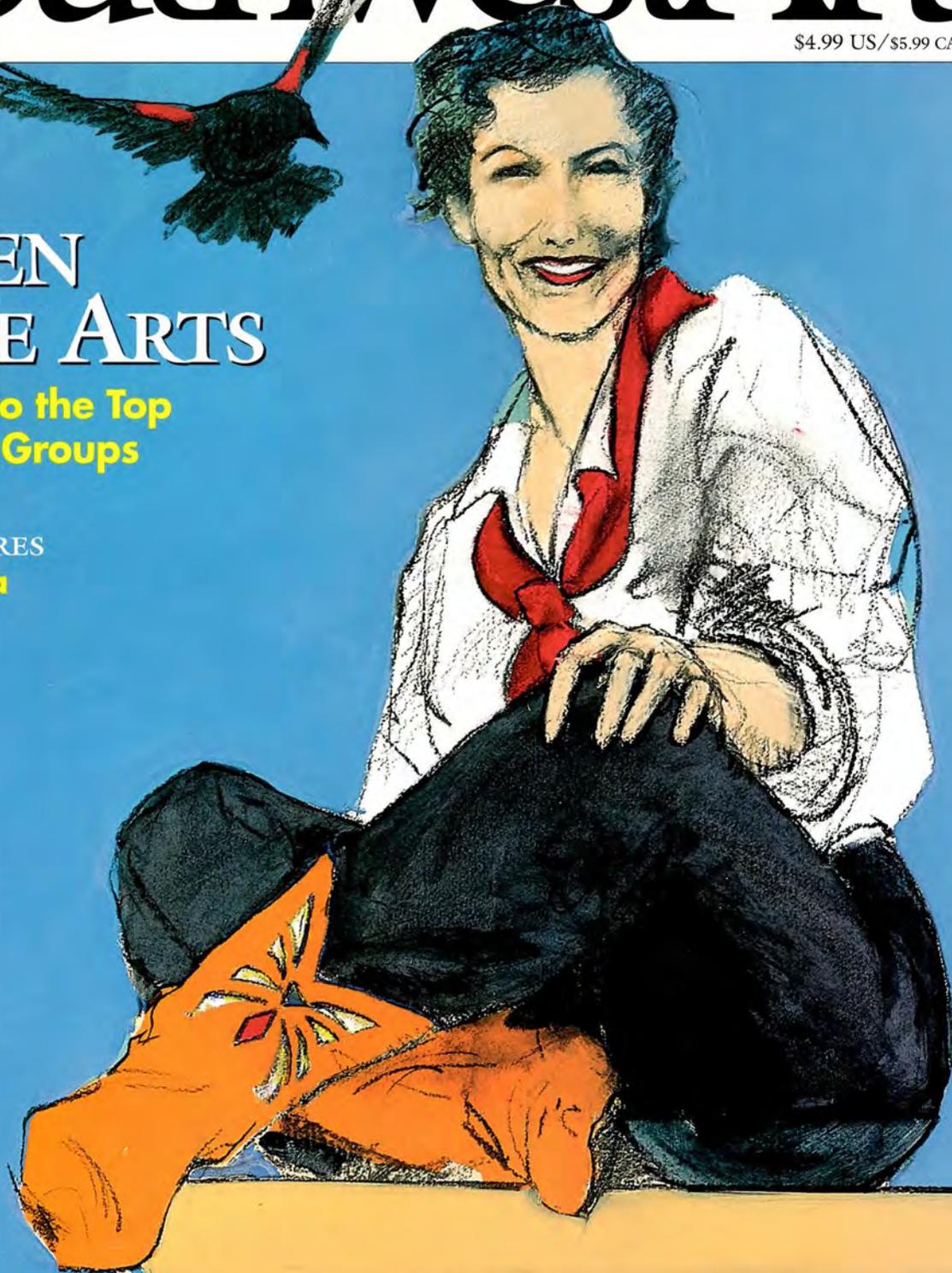
NOVEMBER 1996

\$4.99 US/\$5.99 CAN

## WOMEN IN THE ARTS

Your Guide to the Top  
Western Art Groups

.....  
ART ADVENTURES  
Tucson, Arizona



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# American Women Artists

*We have a very strong commitment to our art, to produce to the best of our abilities.*

“**G**ood art has no gender base” might well be the credo of the American Women Artists. The statement was made by Tucson Museum of Art Director Robert Yassin in the catalog of the exhibition that launched the group in 1991. As part of an annual city-wide celebration of women in the arts, the museum organized an exhibit of paintings and sculpture by 12 contemporary women artists working with traditional western themes. Among those selected for the first exhibit were current members Barbara Garvin, Pat Mathiesen, Vel Miller, Cynthia Rigden, Rogue Simpson, Dee Toscano, Mary Wyant and Star York.

Public response to the show was strong, and the museum held the exhibit annually through 1994. Beginning the second year, the artists themselves

invited new participants to join them. Focusing on quality rather than subject matter, they broadened their fold each year, adding such artists as Shirley Thomson Smith, Donna Howell-Sickles and Sherrie McGraw.

By 1994, the group had grown to 30 artists and moved well beyond its western origins. No longer fitting in with the Tucson Museum’s agenda, the artists left the museum but agreed to keep exhibiting together.

Today, the American Women Artists has 28 members scattered from Minnesota to Texas and from California to Oklahoma. There is no formal structure, no dues or rules. The members have been professional artists an average of 25 years each and have shown their work in galleries, museums and major shows such as the Prix de West Invitational, Artists of Amer-

ica and Northwest Rendezvous.

While the group’s primary focus is on producing and exhibiting quality artwork, their recent exhibit at the National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson, WY, raised public consciousness as well. The exhibit, held March 1-June 25, attracted 32,000 viewers, many of whom commented, “What a great show! Why aren’t more women artists represented in museum collections and galleries?” Another NMWA exhibit is planned for 1998. —MLB

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**RIGHT: DONNA HOWELL-SICKLES, A FAMILY TRADITION, MIXED MEDIA, 60 x 40, CONTEMPORARY SOUTHWEST GALLERIES, SANTA FE, NM, AND MARTIN-HARRIS GALLERY, JACKSON, WY.**

“The cowgirl is my icon for women in general: She gives us someone of warmth and humor with whom we can share a good laugh.”

**LEFT: CYNTHIA RIGDEN, HOOPS & HORNS, BRONZE, 9½ x 24, EDITION 15, TRAILSIDE AMERICANA FINE ART GALLERIES, SCOTTSDALE, AZ, AND WICKENBURG GALLERY, WICKENBURG, AZ.**

“My work is western because I sculpt what I see around me: My models for this bronze were five of my own Texas purebred longhorn steers.”



