

# Austin Friends of Folk Art

## 2008 annual report: AFFA gives!

### AFFA supported folk art with \$2,750 in grants

#### ◆ Lisa Orr & Troy Lanier, \$500 to help document and spread knowledge about folk potters.

For the second film in their documentary series about the pottery techniques of Michoacán. This one, which features the wildly imaginative figures of Ocumicho, will take its place next to their first film which focused on the intricate piña pottery of Patamban and José de Gracia.



In her grant request, Lisa wrote: *The film will fulfill a lifelong dream to discover and disseminate the wonderful pottery processes absolutely unique to Mexico. There is a rich tradition of ceramics that continues in many areas, but unfortunately it is in decline, primarily due to economic issues. Educating the public about these artists may give them the edge they need to continue. It is my wish to see these traditions continue...and not diminish as manufactured cooking and serving pots become more widely utilized in these communities.*

#### ◆ Feria Maestros del Arte, \$1,000 to help develop new markets to ensure folk artists survive.

AFFA again helped transport artists to the 3-day market in Chapala. Organized by an army of volunteers, the Feria provides selected artists with room and board, assistance with transportation if needed, a place to sell their work, and effective marketing—all with absolutely no fees or commissions. Why do the Feria's volunteers work so hard? To help keep Mexico's rich folk art traditions alive! (Financial pressures are forcing artists to abandon their art and seek work in the cities.)

#### ◆ Mexic-Arte Museum, \$1,000 to promote respect for folk artists and strengthen cultural identity.

AFFA funded a Mexic-Arte Museum outreach project at a local elementary school, where children learned about Mexican Día de los Muertos customs and some famous Mexican folk artists.



Austin artist Nilea Rohrer-Parvin guided the children in making papier mache Día de los Muertos masks and fantastical *alebrije* figures. In the process, they learned about the Linares family of Mexico City, world-famous for figures like these skeletons.



#### ◆ Encouraging local art teachers and raising awareness about folk art right here in the U.S.

First AFFA subsidized travel for 13 local art teachers to go with us to Houston to see the PBS Craft in America touring exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Craft. Then we offered mini grants to teachers who were inspired enough to undertake a project with their students.

#### ◆ \$250 mini grant to Patsy Sommers Elementary School encourages collaboration and artistic self-expression.

Inspired by the trip to the Craft in America Exhibition, art teacher Deby Childress decided to have her students create a mosaic mural for their new school. AFFA's grant funded a presentation by well-known tile muralist Jean Graham which inspired the children and launched the project. The school's PTA allotted \$1,100 to execute the mural which will have six panels (one for each grade) featuring student mosaics. All 706 students will also create a butterfly, bug or flower tile to form a unifying border. Here students work out designs in a computer art session.



### Our programs served members & the public

In 2008 we made an effort to attract new members by holding more events in places that were open to the public.

**Jan. 19. Visit to W.W. Treenware Co., in Elgin, TX.** In a 1901 building on Main St., Nancy Lou Webster, whose traditional Welsh love spoons are hotly collected, showed us how she hand shapes kitchen utensils using native woods. It was an interesting studio tour, a fun visit with a colorful Texas artisan, and a chance to try our hands at making treenware.

#### Feb. 10. Membership Party at the Home of John & Melissa Torres.

A beautiful home, a fascinating collection of Mexican masks and other folk art, friends, food, spirits, the music of Cienfuegos, a dance demo and merengue lesson all made an event to share. And share we did. Members brought friends who had a grand time, and quite a few joined AFFA!

◆ **March 29. Unveiling of the Crestview Wall of Welcome.** The entire neighborhood organized to honor Jean Graham for the block-long wall of welcome she designed, coordinated, and assembled near Woodrow and St. John's. Neighbors made the border tiles with Jean's guidance. AFFA had provided some grant money to help bring the project to completion.



**April 5. Trip to Houston Museum of Contemporary Craft for PBS touring exhibit, Craft in America: Expanding Traditions.** The 3-part PBS special, *Craft in America*, is a gem which explores the history and significance of the craft movement in the U.S. and its impact on the nation's cultural heritage. *Memory* looks at the historical relevance of craft through the eyes of several contemporary pioneers in the field. *Landscape* examines the relationship of craft artists to their media and the natural world. *Community* highlights the social and emotional connections that