

History

The Desert Art Center

At

The Francis Stevens School

The Desert Art Center, DAC, which was established in 1950, is the oldest art organization in the Coachella Valley. It is a non-profit group, whose purpose is to promote art in the community, and to provide scholarships to local high school seniors. This landmark building was the first school in Palm Springs. The school was built in 1927 by Frances Stevens, who was the wife of cattle rancher Prescott T Stevens who built the El Mirador Tower in 1928. The building began its life as their home, until 1927, when the first classrooms were constructed. In 1974 the City of Palm Springs purchased the site, and President Gerald Ford dedicated it as a cultural arts center.

Prior to its present location, the DAC occupied at least three other locations since its inception. In 1995 the City leased the two buildings at 550 N. Palm Canyon to the Desert Art Center.

The co-op now has over 200 members, which includes over 115 artists, many of whom are nationally known, and who display their work at the Desert Art Center Gallery as well as many other venues across the country. The artwork includes paintings (all media), pastels, prints, mixed media, photography, sculpture, ceramics, glassworks and jewelry. In addition to this wide variety of media, there is a beautiful selection of art cards designed by member artists. Of course, all artwork is for sale, and the prices are very reasonable.

In addition to the bi-monthly gallery openings and the scholarship program, the gallery space is offered to other non-profit, and fundraising groups, as well as for civic activities. The facility is also available for private day, or evening events, and certain specified areas may be reserved by individual artist members for their exclusive exhibition use, for a limited period of time. Fees for these arrangements are available upon request.

The Desert Art Center offers classes 7 days per week, both in studio and plein air. The classes represent a wide variety of media instruction: oils, watercolors, drawing and pastels, sculpture, stained glass, and life drawing. Many of our teachers are nationally known. Class sizes are limited, therefore reservations are necessary. Please refer to current newsletters or the DAC website, www.desertartcenter.com, for specific information and schedules.

As you know, you do not have to be an artist to join the Desert Art Center. It is for all those who appreciate art. We accept several levels of participation: Regular, Gallery, Student, Business, Life member and Benefactor. Please find details under Application for Membership. Your continuing membership in the Desert Art Center is vital to the preservation of this beautiful historic space that allows local artists to promote their work, and to the continuation of our valuable scholarship program. Remember, dues and contributions are tax deductible.

Past Presidents 1950 - 2011

MARY WOLSETH, founder of the Desert Art Center in 1950 and first chair of the interim committee handed the gavel to Zaddie Bunker as she herself resigned from the board and became executive secretary to the new president.

ZADDIE BUNKER, a Palm Springs businesswoman since 1913 and one of the best known Village residents, became President by unanimous vote in April 1951.

Zaddie Bunker 1951 – 1952	Neva Green 1984 – 1986
George Wheeler 1952 – 1954	Robert Weil 1986 – 1988
Graham Dexter 1954 – 1956	Margery Holly 1988 – 1990
Oscar Stern 1956 – 1958	William W. Scarlett 1990 – 1992
Gaylord Richmond 1958 – 1960	Sydney Cohen 1992 – 1994
William Darling 1960 – 1962	Edna L. Hollinger 1994 – 1996
Lois Sakin 1962 – 1964	Linda A. Mcelroen-Smith 1996 – 1998
Joseph Frey 1964 – 1966	Bud Hillyer 1998 – 2000
Wilton Mccooy 1966 – 1968	Peter Palm 2000 – 2002
Carl Bray 1968 – 1970	Betty J. Mitchell 2002 – 2004
Irene Fenton 1970 – 1972	Richard Titus 2004 – 2005
Lela Schade 1972 – 1974	Robert Rogers 2005 – 2006
Marj Schumacher 1974 – 1975	Karen A. Brobeck 2006 – 2008
Nona Taylor 1975 – 1976	Adele A. Hill 2008 – 2010
Nona Taylor 1976 – 1978	Louise Passey & Jonathan Caisse 2010 – 2011
William C. Willoughby 1978 – 1980	Jonathan Caisse & Brad Zylstra 2011-2012
Maxine Acker 1980 – 1982	
Betty Johnson 1982 – 1984	

Snippets from the Past

MARY WOLSETH was born in Tacoma, Washington in 1900 and was a graduate in nursing from the University of Washington. She worked in the Rockefeller hospital in Shanghai in the early 1930's where she met James Wolseth who worked for American Express. Her uncle, George Allen, subdivided Cathedral City, and Allen Avenue in Cathedral City and is named after him. When Mary and Jimmy came back to the States, about 1934, she started the Desert Lodge on C Street property she received from her Uncle George. The Desert Lodge was a private school mainly for asthmatic children. At one time she was supervisor of nursing in Riverside. Jimmy was an artist and one of the first trustees, along with Mary, to start the Desert Art Center. She died in 1993 in Redmond, Washington.

ZADDIE BUNDER, became first president of the Desert Art Center at the Villa Royale, Palm Springs on April 9, 1951, after a unanimous vote. The interim chair, Mary Wolseth, handed her the gavel and meeting began under her leadership. Mrs. Bunker said that her chief concern was the acquisition of buildings and grounds suitable for classes in the arts and crafts and establishment of a real Western teaching center to meet the increasing demand of winter visitors and retired residents. The high schools are urging the Art Center to help them in their adult education program for which they have no day time outlets and very inadequate laboratory and workshop housing for teaching of crafts.

From the Desert Sun, January 1967 'Rim Rock Cove is where members of the Desert Art Center will hold their January Paint-Out in the desert, Friday, January 27, 1967, weather permitting. Bill Hager says to turn on the dirt road off Highway 111 just west of the Steak Ranch and Rim Rock Restaurant and follow the mountain. This is the old original highway from Palm Springs to Indio. The Desert Art Center, a cooperative of local artists from all over the state with headquarters at 444 South Indian Avenue, has initiated a unique program of group painting termed "Paint-Outs". These are field trips in which members visit various outdoor locations around the Palm Spring Area.'

From the Desert Sun, December 26, 1980 'The demonstrating artist for the Jan. 2 meeting of the Desert Art Center is artist Sally Ward. Known to many art enthusiasts for her oils, acrylics and watercolors. In recent years she has painted in Italy, Greece, Hawaii, Honduras and Guatemala. Many of her paintings are in important collections across the nation and overseas. She is a member of the shadow Mountain Palette Club and the Desert Art Center.

This is a time of reflection and gratitude. A time to fully accept ourselves and others. As Desert Art Center members our friendship is a gift and for this we can be thankful. And how can this development of friendship further develop? Participate in our Association and our Association's activities and encourage each other in our times together.. May this New Year be one of your best.

Robert A. Weil, President, January 1985

Desert Art Center DONER LIST

The Desert Art Center would like to thank the following people who have been kind enough to support our gallery and teaching facility with their generous contributions:

2008 – 2009 Season

The REMINGTON (\$100 - \$499)

Alan and Bonnie Cashman

Peter Mardon

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Donald Dietz

Terry Casella

The VAN GOUGH (\$500 - \$2400)

Stephen Nicholas and Sally Benson

2009 – 2010 Season

The VAN GOUGH (\$500 - \$2400)

Anna and Joseph DeLuca

2010 – 2011 Season

The VAN GOUGH (\$500 - \$2400)

Anna and Joseph DeLuca

Sam Ponn in memory of Nancy Ponn