

Category: Artist
Nominee: Annie Lopez

Governor's Arts Awards Nomination Sample

Nominee Bio

Annie Lopez, a native of Phoenix, is influenced by family and personal experiences. Since 1983, she has exhibited her work nationally, including: "Paper!" at the Phoenix Art Museum; "American Voices" at the Smithsonian Institution; "The Show" at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe and "In Celebration: A Century of Arizona Women Artists" which traveled throughout Arizona. She has been given solo exhibits at the Phoenix Art Museum; University of Arizona in Tucson; Arizona State University and MARS Artspace, Phoenix, Arizona.

Lopez has received a Mid-Career Award from the Contemporary Forum of the Phoenix Art Museum; purchase award from the Tucson Museum of Art; project grant from the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC); a project grant from New Forms Regional Grants Program(NFRIG); a fellowship grant from the Art Matters Foundation, New York; and a fellowship from the Arizona Commission on the Arts. Her work is in the collection of the Phoenix Art Museum; National Hispanic Cultural Center of New Mexico; Planned Parenthood; City of Phoenix; City of Glendale; Arizona State University; the Tucson Museum of Art and the Diane and Bruce Halle Collection of Latin American Art.

Lopez is an active participant in the Phoenix art scene. For seventeen years, she was an artist member with MARS (Movimiento Artístico del Río Salado). She donates her time to jury exhibits and mentor artists. Lopez served two terms on the Arts and Culture Commission for the City of Phoenix. She regularly exhibits in the Phoenix area.

Describe the contributions the nominee made to the development and growth of the arts in Arizona

As a member of MARS, she was an active artist member who documented all events, was in charge of bookkeeping and grantwriting for the organization, scheduled exhibitions, served as a liaison to the arts commissions, local schools, press, and community groups and served as Interim Director.

She was present at the formation of Art Detour and what eventually became First Fridays. She was an advocate for inclusion of local non-Chicano artists to exhibit and join MARS. At the time, there were not many spaces for local artists to present their work.

As a MARS board member: wrote grants, planned fundraising and special events and recruited community members as board members. As a board member of Artlink: served on publicity, fund raising and grant writing committees. As a volunteer member of the Phoenix Arts and Culture Commission board: Chair of the Art in Public Places Committee, also served on the communications, diversity and Executive Committees, and was an advocate for local artists' inclusion in national calls to artists. Also served on the steering committee for Downtown Voices.

As a local artist, she has volunteered to serve on grant panels and artist selection panels for the City of Phoenix and the Arizona Commission on the Arts. She believes in promoting local artists as artists, rather than qualifying where they live and work. In 1999, she opened a gallery/studio on Roosevelt, providing a venue for other artists to exhibit long before the current wave of galleries.

What has this individual artist done in his/her career to move the artistic field and/or the Arizona arts community forward?

Lopez has always worked to change that label and how people define Chicano art. Her artwork cannot always be identified as created by a Latina. She doesn't reject the idea of the traditional imagery or palette, but chose a different path. Lopez is a proud fourth-generation Arizonan. She uses her own story and that of her family to speak to viewers through text and photographs. Her artwork educates about Latinos in Arizona through storytelling. Her family tales have shattered the myth that Latinos in early Phoenix only lived in certain areas, or worked certain jobs or came into Arizona illegally.

One piece, from her "Storybook" series, is titled, "Alien Inspector." It displays her maternal grandmother's alien registration card, obtained as she entered the United States, stamped by the Arizona company that sponsored her entry and that of her husband. Lopez is proud of who she is, and uses her ethnicity mixed with her sense of humor to create artwork that teaches and entertains. A recent series titled, "Spic English," combined family images with text from an English learners textbook. The title has double meaning as a pronunciation and an insult. At MARS, she worked to have the artwork of the member artists accepted into the mainstream and while with the Phoenix Arts Commission she advocated often for local artists.

What sets this particular artist apart from others in his or her field of work?

Lopez sets herself apart with her artwork. She works in cyanotype, an increasingly rare and historic photographic process. She uses the process differently than the few other artists who are familiar with it. Lopez creates her negatives from vintage family photographs, found photographs and her own images. She combines the photos with text to make a statement about herself, her family or the world around her. One particular series, "The Almost Real History of Art in Phoenix" tells of her experiences as an artist. The series, exhibited at the Phoenix Art Museum, struck a note with many viewers and was purchased by the museum. Another series, the "Hispanic Series," was exhibited at the Smithsonian and featured in the New York Times. This series was inspired by the prejudice she encountered growing up and also in the art world. Recently, she has taken her cyanotypes, normally displayed framed on a wall, and created sculptural pieces.

Lopez is now making paper dresses. She prints using cyanotype on the paper used to wrap tamales, a printing surface she connects to culturally. These prints are sewn together to create her "fabric." She then cuts out pieces which are sewn together with thread, into a dress. These dresses have functioning zippers and hook and eyes. Each dress is different, from a variety of eras and design. Each dress is like a journal entry, every one a unique incident or reminiscence. She exhibited her first fourteen dresses at the Phoenix Art Museum, in a solo show.