



Self Portrait on the Way to Class by Donna Granata 2007

FOCUS ON THE MASTERS

An Evening with Donna Granata

*****Special Date and Location*****

Sunday, October 12, 2008 - 7:00 p.m.

**Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza - Janet and Ray Scherr
Forum**

2100 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.

Sponsored by Paula Spellman

Ongoing Sponsors: Passion Flowers, Piajeh Women's Apparel,
Technology Development Center, TOTV

"Artists teach us to see the world with refreshed vision, they force us to ask questions about society, they console us and even enrage us. But, above all, they engage us and remind us of our own role in the world." So comments Donna

Granata, Founder & Executive Director of Focus on the Masters and much admired for her penetrating interviews of artists. Donna will herself be the object of interest as FOTM volunteer Mary Galbraith visits with her. Rarely interviewed, Donna will discuss her own development as an artist and historian, reflecting on her many friendships with artists in our Ventura County. This special Sunday night edition of our Tuesday Talk will heighten your appreciation of the current exhibition at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza -- History is Now: The Focus on the Masters Portrait Series. Reserve your seat now for what promises to be a most enjoyable evening as two friends and colleagues discuss how local artists enrich our lives.

Free event with parking provided. RSVP 805.653.2501
History Is Now: Portraits by Donna Granata exhibition, in Kavli Theater,
open 6-7 p.m. for guests attending the interview.

www.FocusOnTheMasters.com

Artist Statement

"The people we meet and the experiences we share make up the armature on which we drape our souls."

~Donna Granata

"Why have I devoted so much of my personal life to capturing on film the artists who have so enriched our community? What is it about an artist's life and work that appeals to me on a visceral level? Is it because with each subject I learn more about myself?"

Art has always played a very important role in my life. From a very early age, art was an escape. It was a safe haven, protecting me from the ills of life. I have always found inspiration in the courage it takes to reveal oneself in art. In a very real sense, there's a piece of me in every portrait. I am enriched by each of these artists. Each one increases my understanding of the human condition. I'm not alone. People have been fascinated by art and artistic expression since early cave painting. There is something so fascinating about creative expression that intrigues us and keeps us engaged.

Prior to capturing the portraits, I spend hours learning about the artists through personal interviews, recorded in-depth oral histories and studies of their work. The artist and I appear together at a Tuesday Talk, Focus on the Masters' monthly artist interview, where we have an opportunity to not only discuss the artist's work, but its underlying philosophy. It is intoxicating to get to the artist's studio, set up my gear and be allowed to interpret the artist I have come to know.

My goal is to document these extraordinary individuals at a precise moment in their evolution as an artist and in my own.

I have always been surrounded by artists. From my family to my closest friends, there has never been a time when I was not encircled by extraordinarily gifted people. These creative individuals ingrained in me a foundation that would last a lifetime. Artists who have had a profound impact on my development include china painter Blanche McBroom, abstract expressionist Gerd Koch and photographer Arnold Newman. It takes a lot of dedication to be an artist. I will always be grateful to these mentors who were courageous enough to pursue their muse and who gave me the gift I share with you.

Additional Information - FOTM Program Description

Throughout history artists have tended to fall in and out of the public eye. Ranging from who is in vogue at the time to artists re-emerging posthumously, those who survive the test of time are artists who write or who are written about. Patrons of the arts, family members, art dealers and critics are often left with the task of championing the work and securing the memory of the artists. At FOTM, we take this concept one step further.

Established in 1994, Focus on the Masters is a non-profit arts organization, whose mission is to bring highly accomplished artists to the forefront of the community, emphasizing the importance of the arts to a healthy society. We unite a community of art lovers, patrons and educators providing the public with a first hand opportunity to experience accomplished artists. The photographs you see on display are only one aspect of the artists' documentation. FOTM is an archive with extensive biographical material including audio and video recordings. We are building a bridge for historians to follow.

When the heart leads, passion will follow.

My passion for portraiture is the foundation on which FOTM was built. Following a devastating fall that resulted in more than a year of debilitating convalescence, I found myself organizing earlier negatives and prints created while a student at Brooks Institute of Photography (1990 - 1993). Suddenly it became apparent that my portraits of friends, such as accomplished artists Gerd Koch, Mary Beth Hanrahan, Sergio Aragones and Lindsay B. Scott, along with snapshots of other friends, including David A. Leffel and the late Beatrice Wood, were more than ordinary pictures: they were historic documents. I realized that I had the opportunity and ability to assist my fellow artists by providing the groundwork for future generations.

With a strong background in art history, my love for the visual arts and my dedication to arts education, Focus on the Masters evolved organically. Soon, friends and family assembled to assist me in this endeavor, fundraising began and today FOTM's ever growing archive contains over 1,200 files on artists who have lived or worked within Ventura County. Our dedicated Board, staff and volunteers log over 200 hours per week working towards our mission.

How An Artist Is Chosen For Documentation

Each year a panel of distinguished artists and art advocates selects from a nominated list 10 artists (five women and five men) for formal documentation. The selection is based on the following criteria:

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- the artist's mastery of the medium;
- the artist's level of peer recognition; and
- the artist's contribution to the cultural history of Ventura County.

Documentation begins with the gathering of whatever biographical and visual materials the artists have available. The artists participate in extensive recorded oral histories. At the Tuesday Talks, monthly interviews which are video taped in front of a live audience, the general public has an opportunity to meet the artists and experience their work first hand. The artists are able to exhibit original work, share personal experiences and give advice to the gathered audience. All artists are encouraged to update their archive on a regular basis so that documentation remains current.

Each portrait is my personal view of these extraordinary people. In most cases, I photograph the artists after the extensive documentation of their life and work. The label accompanying each portrait notes when the image was taken, the location and when applicable the Tuesday Talk interview denoting the date the artist was publicly documented. Dictated by the artist's work and life, some images are very traditional; some are very avant-garde. I try to incorporate symbolism and metaphor, creating a narrative within each photograph.

From the artists' biographies, cross-curricular lesson plans are developed and taken into the schools through our Learning To See Youth Outreach. The relevance of the artist's life and work is woven into the subjects the students are studying in school. The students then have a hands-on experience by creating their own work of art in the media being featured. I developed the Learning To See Youth Outreach program to emphasize hard work, determination, commitment and passion -- qualities all of the artists we document possess and qualities needed to succeed in any endeavor. The art lessons cultivate a greater caring for the community and lead to a greater acceptance of cultural diversity.

Learning To See encourages creative thinking and problem solving skills critical to coping in these uncertain times. Fostering a generation of creative thinkers is essential to our communities' well being. In addition, we are building an audience of art appreciators who we hope will perpetuate arts education in the schools.

The FOTM Archive is available for research by appointment only. Contributions are always NEEDED and are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

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www.FocusOnTheMasters.com