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The Yellowstone Art Museum President's Awards for 2020 Service to the Arts

[Billings Montana]

At its Board of Trustees meeting this week, the President of the Yellowstone Art Museum's Board of Trustees was pleased to bestow the annual President's Awards for Service to the Arts. Given out since 2001, these awards recognize outstanding service from philanthropists, artists, and volunteers to the YAM and the art community. In most cases, awardees have given prominent support over a number of years. The 2020 awardees are:

PHILANTHROPISTS OF THE YEAR

John & Patricia Burg

John & Patricia Burgs' commitment to the YAM spans more than two decades. As donors, members, and through Patricia's time as a docent, the Burgs have been very involved with the museum, and understand that there are many moving parts and so much support necessary to keep us delivering all of our programs. Their steadfast commitment has ensured that we are able to keep these programs operating for over two decades. John & Patricia have understood the importance of the YAM's capital campaigns and its endowment throughout its history. The Burgs' gifts—lately emphasizing endowment—are quiet generous, and steady. John & Patricia's gifts to the YAM cumulatively place them amongst the first ranks of the philanthropists whom we're proud to count as Legacy Society members.

VOLUNTEER/DOCENT OF THE YEAR

Jean Posusta

Jean Posusta has been a docent who proactively participates in educational programming at the YAM. She is always striving to do more and explore new ways of teaching, learning, and creating art. Jean has been a YAM docent since 2011. Since that time, she has toured children and adults, always seriously undertaking her training on current exhibitions and best practices for inquiry based learning. The projects Jean has undertaken this past year have had a powerful impact on museum programming and on docents here and across the state. Jean is an artist who often participates in ArtWalk. She is also a prolific author of a wide range of books. When Jean volunteered to read a story to young children as part of YAM's Art & a Story program, she wrote her own story.

ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Neltje

Neltje's paintings, like the artist, are intense, complex, and larger than life. Now in her 80s, Neltje is still constantly learning, growing, and taking on new challenges. For a Wyoming retrospective in 2012, she painted her first 10' x 30' works, *The Moroccan Suite*. She followed with four wall-scale paintings representing the four seasons. These works anchor her current exhibition at the YAM, offering an experience of sublime beauty that envelops, overwhelms, and, ultimately cradles the viewer. Her fearless energy is an inspiration to anyone who comes in contact with her or her paintings. Living in New York as a young adult, Neltje absorbed the spontaneous energy and improvisational style of the abstract expressionists, whose work she experienced firsthand. Inspired by Joan Mitchell, she learned to channel "a sense of power and joy," as well as energy and rage. She stated in a 2013 interview, "Rage has been my benefactor all my life, it has driven me to do what I have done..." In 1966, Neltje moved to Wyoming. In her late 30s, Neltje began her excursion into the discipline of Sumi-e painting, the core of her later work.

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