

## **A Welcome from Sandra Burnett, Executive Director**

We are so happy to welcome you to Salem Virtual Art Fair 2020! Join us in exploring the outpouring of inspiration from these many talented artists. This Virtual Art Fair is a celebration of community, resilience, and above all, a love of the creative spirit.

You'll recognize many of the wonderful touches of our annual Salem Art Fair & Festival, but our Virtual Art Fair is also a unique experience all its own: a combination of technology and fabulous one-of-a-kind artwork, coupled with the ease of browsing and shopping from the comfort of your own home!

Enjoy the experience and please return many times all weekend long!

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## **Supporting the Arts**

*"Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life."* This popular quote is attributed to Picasso in a time long gone. Today however, with the challenges facing us all of the pandemic, global violence and so many inequities on many levels, we need the arts more than ever.

Especially in these times, the arts are the great community builder. This is confirmed by a study from University of Illinois which demonstrates that people who engage in the arts or watch others do so are more likely to be civically engaged, socially tolerant, and altruistic. Their data found a high correlation between the arts and altruistic actions—like volunteering, donating blood, donating money, or doing favors for a neighbor—that place the interests of others over the interests of self.

In addition, according to the Americans for the Arts, 67% of Americans believe "the arts unify our communities regardless of age, race, and ethnicity" and 62% agree that the arts "help me understand other cultures better"—a perspective observed across all demographic and economic categories. However, it is particularly pertinent that 73% say the arts are a "positive experience in a troubled world." These are benefits that persist even in difficult social and economic times.

In this year of change, we stand together and know that art in our lives is absolutely pivotal in understanding one another, in finding common ground, and in imagining creative solutions together. Art unites us in our humanity and enhances our natural instinct to overcome obstacles and to care for each other – to remember what it means to be human, especially during the most challenging of times.

So the arts ennoble and inspire us. They bring us joy, help us express our values, and build bridges between cultures. I sincerely hope that something of these positive impacts have been felt by you today.

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## **Background to Salem Virtual Art Fair**

The Salem Art Fair & Festival is the longest running (70 years) and largest Art Fair of its kind in Oregon. In March 2020, as the crisis over Covid-19 began to accelerate, Salem Art Association realized that it had to cancel the Salem Art Fair & Festival. However, the Salem Virtual Art Fair (VAF) was conceived in the wake of this cancellation.

It is being offered as a community service to honor the idea of community resilience, but also to support artists at a particularly difficult time. The sector of Art Fair artists make their annual livelihood by travelling around the country during the art fair season (spring to fall). All major art fairs in the country have been cancelled due to the pandemic and the effect on the artists has been devastating. So in keeping with our proud Salem tradition, we have built this new and exciting platform for our Art Fair Artists, connecting them once again with our community, and beyond.

The concept started with the vision of a visitor looking down on the Art Fair from above and engaging in an interactive interface. We wanted to generate something of the experience that you would have had at the in-person event, and so most of the artists in our Virtual Art Fair would have been in our in-person fair. The technological challenges of this venture were huge but we were fortunate to have a stellar team, and I do want to express my gratitude to them all: Eileen Cotter Howell, Eliz Snowcarp, Dia Devine, Chloe Lawton, Daniel Burnett and Frank Miller; and also to Barry Shapiro who designed the logo. Much was achieved over the last couple of months and you all made it happen.

Thank you too to the VAF sponsors. Through your generosity this was made possible:

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The Salem Virtual Art Fair was a huge learning experience and the result is a Salem Art Fair like none other! But it is only successful because of you, here in this moment, supporting SAA and the artists through your engagement. Thank you all for spending your precious time with us and I hope that, by the end of the day, you will feel inspired and enriched.