

Valley artists catch break, earn grants

Painter, teacher can focus on art

By John Carlos Villani
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ART BITS

Even though we haven't heard any recent reports about the starvation rate of Valley artists, that doesn't mean local painters, sculptors, potters and jewelers are flush with cash.

They may not be working a nine-to-five factory shift, but in most cases, artists are hard-working, undercompensated folks dedicated to their craft.

FYI

HOW TO GET A GRANT

For more information about grants from state and national sources, contact the Arizona Commission on the Arts at (602) 255-5882 or www.arizonaarts.org. The application deadline for the next round of visual-arts grants is Sept. 13.

grants are awarded in recognition of outstanding achievement.

Non-profit, privately funded foundations award the grants. In art circles, these foundations are notori-

ous for their application of rigorous criteria.

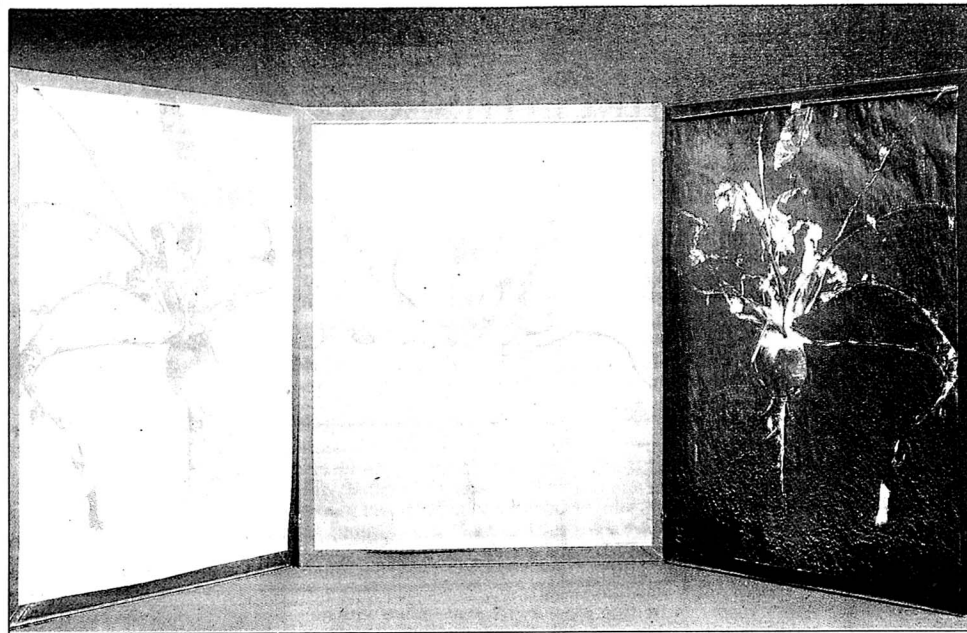
Two Valley artists have successfully navigated their way through the process, gaining large grants from prestigious national foundations.

Mark Vinci, a painter living in Phoenix, received a \$24,000 grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, a New York-based group founded by the late Lee Krasner, widow of abstract painter Jackson Pollock. For Vinci, who paints in a large metal shed in his back yard, the foundation's award is especially gratifying — the same foundation rejected his application just last year.

"The grant's going to help me produce art for the next year without my having to worry about some big household expenses," he says.

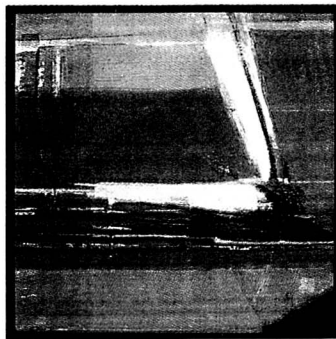
An abstract painter whose work is influenced by the painting of Richard Diebenkorn, Vinci has been a presence on the Valley art scene since 1994. His work is exhibited through New Urban Art and www.artfit.com.

"Getting a grant like this gives me the confidence to stretch my work into some

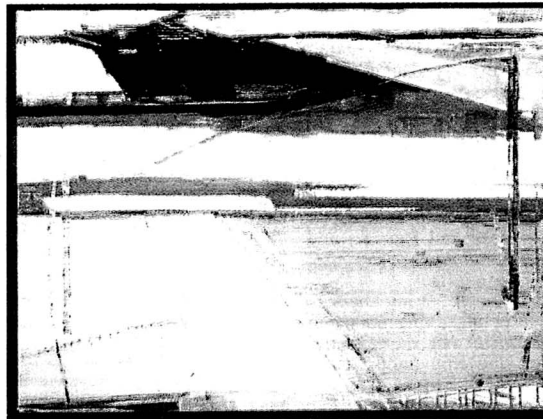


Pieces such as this untitled work in progress (left) helped Carol Panaro-Smith get a grant from a New York foundation. Mark Vinci's abstract paintings (below) also impressed art-appreciative New Yorkers.

Carol Panaro-Smith



Mark Vinci



Mark Vinci

new dimensions," he says. "I think I'll now be doing some larger canvases, and I'll be more likely to approach my art in a looser, more experimental way. It motivates me to become much more aggressive with what I've been thinking about doing in my art."

The other Valley artist receiving a major national grant is Carol Panaro-Smith, a mixed-media artist who is also an instructor at the Metropolitan Arts Institute. Her \$6,500 award from the New

York-based Surdna Foundation is targeted to assist in researching and completing a complicated body of new work.

"The award is specifically intended for art teachers working with high-school students, which is why \$1,500 of the grant is going toward funding a new program at the institute and \$5,000 goes toward helping me finish my

project," Panaro-Smith says.

Her current project, a collaborative effort with Tempe artist James Hajicek, involves creating a type of book using traditional paper and type treatments as well as untraditional media, such as wood framing for the book's pages.

One of Panaro-Smith's first efforts after receiving the grant was to attend a special-

ized book-making seminar at the Chicago Center for the Book, a program affiliated with Columbia College.

"They taught me how to develop the physical structure for the book and how to fit this art project into the realm of what's considered an art book," she says.

In its final form, Panaro-Smith's project will result in the creation of five books that are each formed from four groupings of wood-framed works of art. Each of the wood-framed works will contain three mixed-media photographic images and can be hung on a collector's walls or folded and placed inside a large wooden box.

For artists who need a helping hand at crucial junctures in their careers, grants such as the ones Vinci and Panaro-Smith have received go a long way toward establishing them as nationally recognized talents.

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