

## Celebration of Fine Art



Scottsdale, AZ ~ USA

## History

Celebration of Fine Art founders Tom and Ann Morrow credit a visit to the Laguna Beach Festival of Art in California as their inspiration to start Scottsdale's Celebration of Fine Art. Touring that festival in the late 1980s, the couple realized that Scottsdale would welcome a place for art lovers to meet more than 100 fine artists, watch as fine works of arts are created, and browse and purchase the work. They had owned art galleries in Colorado, Arizona and Wyoming and were looking for a new way to show art. Envisioned as part gallery, part studio and part show and sale, their new approach would be an upscale, intimate, and exciting art event. Unlike traditional art festivals, it would take place over a series of weeks, not weekends.

Where to hold it? As they considered venues, Tom who is a former advertising executive and realtor had an idea. Why not combine art and real estate by staging it on land an owner wanted to hold rather than immediately develop? The property owner would get income from leasing the land and the Morrows would gain a location for their show and sale.

Tom contacted the City of Scottsdale to create Celebration of Fine Art. The City was supportive and even wrote a new ordinance to accommodate the eight-week art event. It opened to rave reviews in 1990 in downtown Scottsdale. Even today, Celebration of Fine Art, now expanded to ten weeks, continues to be the only event that operates under that special ordinance.

Over its eighteen-year history, the Celebration of Fine Art has garnered a national reputation for the quality and value of the art that is exhibited and sold. The show is juried for quality and for variety to ensure that a full spectrum of fine art and fine craft is represented. However, its most lasting impact, audiences and artists agree, are the deep, personal connections that form between artists and art lovers. Those connections are nurtured by the artful, convivial environment. Purposefully informal, it is always professional and encourages conversation and friendships between artists and patrons. This comfortable atmosphere also inspires camaraderie among the artists who enjoy the professional stimulation they find working along side each other in studios during the ten week show.

Throughout the years, Tom's daughter Susan and her husband Jake became involved in the success of the Celebration. In 2004 Jake and Susan Potje assumed a partnership in the business and continue the family dedication to this event. Several years ago Susan began holding weekly sessions for the artists to expand their knowledge of customer relations and build a sense of community. Jake is responsible for the full spectrum of site management.

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Today the Celebration, which is located on north Scottsdale Road and Loop 101, encompasses 40,000 square feet of art under the big white tents. The structure surrounds an acre of landscaped sculpture garden where sculpture created for outdoor use is displayed. Special exhibitions and events are staged throughout the ten weeks and a cafe is open daily for artists and visitors.

Attendance has grown dramatically. In 2007, Celebration of Fine Art attracted more than 50,000 highly educated and well-to-do visitors. According to a survey completed in 2007, 77% of visitors held either undergraduate or graduate degrees. Average household income is \$226,000. They also like Scottsdale. Out-of-towners stay 16 days, more than twice the median stay of the average Scottsdale visitor. And everyone loves the show. Local and out-of-state visitors reported the quality of their experience as 9.8 on a scale of 1 to 10.



Left to right: Jake Potje, Susan Morrow Potje, Ann Morrow and Tom Morrow

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