

# The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Art from the Streets Show an Outstanding Success

**By: Kerri Thompson**

The 13<sup>th</sup> annual Art from the Streets exhibit took place on November 5 & 6, 2005 at The Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH). The event benefits homeless in the Austin area who have chosen art as an emotional and creative outlet.



In 1991, local artists decided to reach out to the Austin homeless community by offering free art classes at a homeless shelter. The classes were offered twice a week to people who needed a nice, safe place to escape the streets and create art. The classes became so popular and so much art was made that the facility could not physically contain all of it. Due to this surplus of art, Art from the Streets (AFTS) held their first art show in 1992. Soon after, the program crafted its mission is to provide a safe and encouraging environment in which the positive spirit of homeless people is nurtured through artistic expression, and to provide them with a source of pride and income through the sale of their work.

Since 1992, every show has taken place at the ARCH, and 2004 was the first year it took place in the new, 7th Street location. This location is great for the artists to display their work as it is bigger, the light is good, and the architecture is beautiful. However, it poses some challenges as

well. For example, it is difficult to physically hang the art because there are many windows and so few walls. In order to overcome this challenge, one of the Directors came up with the affordable, workable solution to hang the art on fencing. The fencing provided a unique, modern touch that made the artists' work even more appealing.



From the beginning, AFTS has been run completely by community volunteers. These volunteers devote their time, love and energy to a cause that they are truly passionate about. Joyce Pohlman, program Co-Director, has gained a lot from her experience with the program. "I never cease to be moved and impressed by the resilience of our artists and their courage in showing their work to the general public." After all, it cannot be easy to show your creative/emotional work to a room full of strangers.

In addition to the artists and volunteers, the consumers benefit greatly from the event as well. Ms. Pohlman loves learning from the artists and notes how others may learn from them as well, "If you stop and listen to the artists for even a short while, you will have gained so much. This

event provides that opportunity for people who might not otherwise have been able to talk with a person who lacks housing."



Throughout the last 13 years, the show has experienced continuous growth. In 1992, the first show drew in 400 visitors and \$1,600 for the 30 artists who participated. Since then, there have been over 20,000 attendees and more than \$350,000 earned for the 700 artists who showed their work. Many artists use the money they receive from the show to pay for basic necessities such as food, clothing, and housing.

2005 proved to be an extremely successful year for AFTS. The event attracted over 2,400 visitors, which is a 75% increase from 2004. There are over 100 homeless people participating in the program currently, and many of them featured their art in the 2005 exhibit.



AFTS is truly an inspiring program. It is extensively supported by the Austin community and continues to spread love, peace and friendship to those who are less fortunate. The artists gain a sense of pride, self-esteem and respect for themselves, which is more valuable than any dollar received.

Art from the Streets is funded in part by the City of Austin (Cultural Arts Division) and by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts. The event is also supported by 3M Austin, the Downtown Austin Alliance, the Theodore P. Davis Charitable Trust, the Donald D. Hammill Foundation, Women and their Work, Inferno Films, and the Austin Ad Federation.

The program is always in need for volunteers. Please visit [www.artfromthestreets.org](http://www.artfromthestreets.org), e-mail [volunteer@artfromthestreets.org](mailto:volunteer@artfromthestreets.org) or call Art from the Streets at (512) 440-0839 for more information.

