

Information@LagunaBeachArts.com  
LagunaBeachArts.org  
PO Box 828, Laguna Beach, CA, 92652

**Media Contact:** Faye Baglin,  
information@lagunabeacharts.com

For Immediate Release  
**Art Stars Shine at Awards Gala – 10 Years of “Louies”**

*Laguna Beach* – On Sunday, April 3, in true academy-award style, 230 community and cultural leaders came together to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Arts Stars. The event was hosted by [seven-degrees] and kicked off with a red carpet reception. Guests then enjoyed champagne, hors d'oeuvres and live music performed by Magnolia Memoir outside on the terrace followed by the awards dinner.

Jonathan Burke, president of Laguna College of Art + Design, welcomed the guests and spoke about the importance of Laguna Beach Arts Alliance (LBaa) and how since its inception it has strengthened the arts in Laguna Beach. He also recognized that in celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Art Stars, LBaa rebranded with a new logo created by LCAD Graphic Student Claire Kairalla.

Burke also presented a Posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award and video tribute in memory of Ken Auster. Auster's wife Paulette accepted the award. Burke said, “We sadly lost a great artist this year. Ken was one of the most significant and enthusiastic Plein Air location painters of his generation. His paintings will forever beautifully capture a poetic visual and narrative environment with just the right amount of light, space and atmosphere.”

Bronze sculptor Louis Longi was recognized for “10 Years of Louies,” the one-of-a-kind sculptures—of which there are 75 altogether—that are created specifically for and presented to the Art Stars award winners each year. He was presented with a beautiful bowl created by John Barber who was the first Art Stars Artist of the Year recipient in 2007.

Last year's recipient of the [seven-degrees] of inspiration \$5,000 grant, dancer/choreographer Delyer Anderson, presented a film of her dance project, “IV”, which premiered last November at the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art. LBaa Chair Faye Baglin recognized Dora Wexell and Mark Orgill with a special “Louie.” Baglin said, “Without a doubt, the Art Star Awards event would not take place without the generosity and professional skills of Dora and Mark. For ten years, they have demonstrated their dedication to the arts community by hosting this event and providing \$40,000 in grants to date.”

The 2016 [seven-degrees] of inspiration grant went to Russell Pierce. Pierce's collection, titled “Change Agents,” will capture and honor through a series of 50 portraits individuals who have made an impact on the world. The artwork will be presented on the walls of [seven-degrees] during the 2017 Art Stars Awards dinner.

Before the awards were presented Festival of Arts Marketing/PR Director Sharbie Higuchi took everyone on an entertaining trip down memory lane – sharing Art Stars trivia in celebration of its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Then, the audience enjoyed a video featuring a musical parody of Art Stars and LBaa from the 2011 “Lagunatics.”

The 2016 Art Star winners were announced:

- ★ **Best Arts Program: “Malpaso Dance Company” - Laguna Dance Festival**
- ★ **Individual Arts Patron of the Year: Jim and Suzanne Mellor**
- ★ **Corporate Arts Patron of the Year: Montage Laguna Beach**
- ★ **Outstanding Arts Collaboration: Intergenerational Literacy Enhancement Project**  
(LOCA Arts Education, Susi Q Senior Center, Woman's Club Laguna Beach, the American Association of University Women, Boys and Girls Club, the Laguna Beach Library, Sally's Fund Transportation and Neighborhood Congregational Church)
- ★ **Arts Leadership: Malcolm Warner (Laguna Art Museum)**
- ★ **Artist of the Year: Olivia Batchelder**

Higuchi summed up the evening's sentiment, "It is important to be acknowledged and appreciated by your peers. The main purpose behind the establishment of Art Stars was to honor the outstanding achievements and contributions in the arts in Laguna Beach as well as inspire and encourage our patrons and hard-working volunteers."

## **ABOUT THE WINNERS:**

### **★ Posthumous Lifetime Achievement Award: Ken Auster**

Ken Auster, a California native, had a long and distinguished career as a professional artist. Swept up in the swell of surf culture of the 60's and while working his way towards a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Long Beach State University, Auster built one of the world's most prominent silkscreen and t-shirt companies, creating legendary surf art. In the mid 1990's Auster moved to a more serious art level, changing his focus to fine art, specifically plein air painting. His passion for painting was shared with hundreds of students who each year travel from around the world to attend his workshops in Laguna Beach and Carmel. Auster's work has received national recognition, been featured in countless galleries and exhibitions, and is part of private and public collections worldwide.

### **★ Best Arts Program: "Malpaso Dance Company" - Laguna Dance Festival**

It's often said that *timing is everything!* Just as our government entered a period of more normal diplomatic relations with Cuba, Laguna audiences were given a taste of Cuba's rich cultural scene with performances by the Malpaso Dance Company. Laguna Dance Festival filled the Laguna Playhouse for each performance by this young contemporary company of 10 dancers from Havana. Although "misstep" is one meaning for the word malpaso, there were no actual missteps in Malpaso's smooth, athletic and passionate performances of their original choreography. Malpaso is committed to bringing nurturing new voices in Cuban choreography.

### **★ Corporate Arts Patron of the Year: Montage Laguna Beach**

Supporting our local arts, nonprofits and welcoming families to the grounds are part of the culture at Montage. Beginning a decade ago, the Montage sponsored LOCA's Art & Sea program, where teaching artists conducted Watercolors on the Beach. For many years, LPAPA's painters have set up easels in the Montage park and beach to capture the gorgeous vistas in their paintings. This past December, the Montage underwrote a family-friendly concert at the Irvine Bowl, featuring the legendary Kenny Loggins. Partnering with the Festival of Arts and local radio station KX93.5, the Montage created a winter wonderland outside the amphitheater. Montage also donated concert proceeds to local non-profits, KX93.5, the Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach, and SchoolPower Laguna Beach Education Fund.

Yet another example of the involvement of Montage in the arts is its fantastic partnership with the Laguna Art Museum, for the past 11 years creating the Museum's annual gala, Palette to Palate. Chef Craig Strong and his team of sous chefs and assistants from Studio Montage prepare a gourmet four-course meal at the Museum.

And this past September, the Laguna College of Art + Design joined the growing list of local nonprofits grateful to Montage Laguna Beach for hosting its annual fundraiser. Collector's Choice attendees enjoyed an elegant dinner and entertainment in the Montages' luxurious environment, while raising scholarship funds for the College.

### **★ Individual Arts Patron of the Year: Jim and Suzanne Mellor**

The Mellors' range of involvements spans education, theater, and the visual arts. Both are current Trustees of Laguna College of Art and Design, where Jim serves as Board Chairman. Suzanne is a Trustee of the Laguna Art Museum, and serves as a member of the Laguna Beach Arts Commission. At Laguna Playhouse, both are highly involved – Jim is a Trustee and Suzanne a founding member and active participant on the Playhouse Women Steering Committee. Outside our zip code, Jim has been a Trustee at the University of California - Irvine, the National Museum of American History, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. As a painter and visual artist herself, Suzanne is deeply steeped in the arts, having played important roles in Washington, DC - as a founding member and advisor to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and as a member of the Director's Circle at the National Gallery of Arts. Clearly, the Mellors are stellar Patrons of the Arts.

### **★ Outstanding Arts Collaboration: Intergenerational Literacy Enhancement Project**

Developed by Elsa Brizzi of LOCA, this program brings together volunteer mentors and tutors with 2nd grade students for weekly after-school classes, to enhance their literacy skills through drawing, writing, and reading. Along with LOCA, this intergenerational experience is a collaboration of seven other Laguna-based organizations, the Susi Q Senior Center, the Woman's Club, American Association of University Women, The Boys and Girls Club, Laguna Beach Library, Sally's Fund, and the Neighborhood Congregational Church. The project has succeeded in assisting low-performing students to develop stronger reading skills and gain self-knowledge and confidence.

★ **Arts Leadership: Malcolm Warner**

As Executive Director of the Laguna Art Museum since January 2012, Malcolm has demonstrated innovation and leadership, taking risks to bring about a major positive shift in the Museum. Visitors enjoy quality museum exhibitions and lectures, focusing on the Art of California from its early years to the present. Through collaborations with local arts nonprofits, such as Laguna Beach Live! and Laguna Dance Festival, Malcolm has expanded the use of the Museum beyond the visual arts, drawing countless new patrons to the Museum. Education programs have flourished under his guidance, engaging the community's youth with Kids Art Studios and summer art camps. Malcolm's genuine enthusiasm and personal style create a welcoming environment for staff, volunteers, collectors and visitors, making our Museum a vibrant cultural center.

★ **Artist of the Year: Olivia Batchelder**

With her roots as a 27-year exhibitor at the Sawdust Art Festival, Olivia creates vibrant works of art on silk and canvas. A warm and generous teacher, she shares her craft through classes at local schools, studios, and internationally. This past July, Olivia became an ambassador for the Arts, by bringing artists to Laguna from India, the Phillipines, Kyrgystan, Indonesia, Bhutan, Japan, and Uzbekistan for a week of workshops and exhibitions with local textile artists. Dubbed "The International Wrap Festival," the artists created wraps, jackets, shawls, and other garments which were modeled during a fashion show here at seven-degrees, celebrating traditional textile arts. Olivia is a working artist who has touched hundreds of lives and expanded recognition of the Laguna Beach arts community.

The Laguna Beach Arts Alliance was established in 2002 as the result of an exciting partnership among more than 20 Laguna Beach organizations. The mission is to serve as an advocate for the arts, promote collaboration and networking among the arts organizations of Laguna Beach, and to serve as a united voice for the arts in the city. Members of the Laguna Beach Arts Alliance include City of Laguna Beach Arts Commission, Community Art Project, Festival of Arts, First Thursdays Art Walk, KX 93.5 Radio, Laguna Art-A-Fair, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach Craft Guild, Laguna Beach Live!, Laguna Beach Sister Cities Association, Visit Laguna Beach, Laguna College of Art & Design, Laguna Concert Band, LOCA Arts Education, Laguna Dance Festival , Laguna Playhouse, Laguna Plein Air Painters Association, Lagunatunes Community Chorus, Blue Water Green Earth, No Square Theatre, Sawdust Art Festival, and [seven-degrees].

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