Marcus Fellows: Making art accessible to Texas communities
A mural created by children in Corpus Christi stands as an icon to what collaboration and imagination can create. It also stands as a symbol for community respect and confidence.

The mural covers a 30-foot wall facing a parking lot at the back of the Oscar Ruedo Activity Center. It is in the heart of a neighborhood plagued with drug and gang activity, prostitution, and societal neglect.

The wall it covers was a message board for area gangs.

"It's the kind of wall that's really just asking to be tagged," says Beth Reese, coordinator of the mural project. "But now that the kids have done this mural, the gangs haven't touched it. They respect that the children in their community spent their time creating this work of art."

And by standing tag free since July, the mural is a testament to how art can bring people together, foster a sense of community, and empower people.

Reese says that is the point of all the projects she facilitates within South Texas communities through Art Connects — an organization she felt obligated to start.

"I was given this wonderful gift that showed me how to let people have meaningful connections with art, and it is my duty to share that gift," Reese says.
The gift Reese was given was a one-year fellowship in a graduate program at the University of North Texas’ School of Visual Arts. She is one of 30 students who have been enrolled as Marcus Fellows.

The Marcus Fellows program, which has been funded by the Edward and Betty Marcus Foundation since 1995, prepares today’s graduate students to be tomorrow’s art education leaders.

Funding is already in place for 15 additional students, ensuring a total of 45 Marcus Fellows in the professional art education world by 2003.

“We founded the fellows program on the belief that a comprehensive education in the visual arts should be a part of the general education of every student, and that it takes leadership to accomplish this,” says Dr. D. Jack Davis, dean of the UNT School of Visual Arts. “We also believe that effective use of art museums and community resources, as well as technology, should be a part of that education.”

During an intense 12-month period, each class of five fellows spends time developing leadership skills, learning how to collaborate, using technology and effectively integrating art into school curricula.

Beth Reese (upper left) was art to build community through her agency Art Connects.
First, she explains the similarities between Western art and Asian art — for example, a lot of art from both cultures is based in religion. Then, she'll talk about the sources Asian artists use for inspiration, drawing parallels to the Western work. She'll eventually have the students create their own piece of art.

The goal is to have the students leave with a clear understanding of the role art plays in Asian culture, as well as in their own.

Lewis has developed a number of specific programs to accompany tours for students in all grade levels. Plus, she has developed a corresponding outreach program where she visits classrooms to talk about Asian art. The museum also offers a series of teacher workshops and provides curriculum packets to help teachers continue to use Asian art as part of their lesson plans.

The lesson plans are vital to helping teachers integrate art into their classrooms. Lewis and the other Marcus Fellows, who work as museum educators at the museums in Dallas and around Texas, are playing leading roles in helping teachers use all of the resources available to them.

They are joined in this effort by the fellows who work as teachers in a number of school districts in the metropolitan area and around the state.

An education coordinator for the Trammell and Margaret Crow Collection of Asian Art in Dallas, Amy Lewis works to make the art of Asia accessible to all.
Anita Hiborn, who teaches middle school students in Piana, and Elizabeth Stoudt, who teaches students at a private school in South Lake, are two of the many fellows using art as a resource for learning all subjects.

"Before I started the program, I always knew that art was important to a complete education and I knew that it could be used as part of the curriculum to foster better understanding of all subjects," says Stoudt. "But I didn’t know how to make that integration happen in a meaningful way. Now, I’ve developed a humanistic curriculum that I’ll use in my classroom that is centered on art, but teaches history, literature and art history."

Hiborn also has developed curricula using art as the center of a lesson plan for other subjects. Last year she worked collaboratively with the history teachers in the school’s three grades — sixth, seventh and eighth — to come up with a way for the work students did in art class to support the things they were learning in history.

The way the schedule works, she would have each class for one six-week period in a semester. In the first weeks she would teach the basics of art, then the class would study images that were significant to the topic in history they were learning.

Anita Hiborn uses art as the center of learning with her students in Piana.
As they would learn about the pictures, they would learn the corresponding historical information.

“She was enthusiastic about doing it, they wanted to learn it, and they all increased their test scores in history,” Hicken says. “But the best part was that the students were learning art and using it to understand their world. They were making meaningful connections with art and truly appreciating its role in culture.

And that is what the program trained us to do.”

Each of the fellows says the education they received has transferred into application easily and has worked. Plus, they say they are all making a difference in a way they would have never thought possible before.

“I was teaching in the same school I’m at now before I applied for the program,” Steward says. “But now I’m reaching more students, and I’m able to teach other teachers how to do the same.

“And if it weren’t for the fellowship and the stipend and support that comes with it, I would have never been able to stop in the middle of my career to get this kind of training,” she says.

But what may be most valuable about the Marcus Fellows program is the

As the community programs coordinator, Scott Wintz played a key role in the creation of the Otis Museum of Art.
network of support that each new graduate falls into.

"We all know who the other fellows are, and we know that we can call on them for help," says Scott Wintemute, manager of community programs for the Dallas Museum of Art.

The fellows see each other at conferences, and they often work together on professional papers. One group of fellows has written an art education book together, and many of the fellows serve on accreditation and advisory boards together. In fact, Lewis appointed five former fellows to his advisory board.

Tamara Longwell, office manager and resident art educator of Greenhouse Gallery in San Antonio, says being an art educator and advocate is now inherent in everything she does.

"Now that I know that art is such a powerful tool for education, I feel bound to do everything I can to make it accessible to as many people as possible," she says. "And that's probably the most lasting effect of my training as a fellow."

The same is true for each of the fellows. Wherever they are and whatever they are doing, all the fellows are out in their communities acting as sagasles advocating for art education.
The Marcus Fellows program is supported by the Edie and Betty Marcus Foundation through the North Texas Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts.
Marcus Fellows by Academic Year

'95-'96
Mary Burke
Carolyn Johnson
Cecilia Leach
Diane McClure

'96-'97
Daisy Brockman
Chelisa Herbrich
Anita Hillborn Nance
Amy Lewis Hofland
Elizabeth Reese

'97-'98
Stephanie Broncano
Tamara Langwell
Robin Shaddix
M. Carmen Smith
D'Ann White
Nichelle Wilson-Parish

'98-'99
Tracy Bays-Boothe
Mary Copeland
Rebecca Martin
Melanie Millar
Scott Winterrowd

'99-'00
Todd Bryant
Sybil Carlson
Denise Clyne-Ruch
Sallie Cockrell
Elizabeth Stroud

'00-'01
Paige Herbert Hellmann
Debbie Kuster
Amy Reed
Sandra Schorr Newton
Marilyn Thompson

School of Visual Arts
University of North Texas
Marcus Fellows by Academic Year

'01-'02
Julie Fonesca de Borges
Nora Christie
Pam Hellman
Christina Kurceren
Pamela McKnight

'02-'03
Marcia Baggs
Ann Camp
Kendra Keefer-McGee
Emily Taylor
Mandy Yeager

'03-'04
Stacey Lizotte
Sarita Talusani
Katie Tharp
Kate Wurtzel

'04-'05
Cindy Zerm Ingram
Valerie Martinez
Brianna McMullen
Lydia Regalado

'05-'06
Lisa Galaviz
Rachael Garnett
Kristin Ireland
Joe Silva
Neil Sreenan

School of Visual Arts
University of North Texas