



Three of the artworks submitted to the Global Art Project are, left, an astronaut by Masahide Fukuyama, a Japanese sixth-grader; right, a map with a heart by Liliias Singolani, an adult who lives in Kingston, Mass.; and, below, the planet Earth by project founder Katherine Josten.



Art *for* Peace



Tucsonan's project unites hopes of many around world

By Thom Walker
The Arizona Daily Star

Two years ago, Tucson artist and poet Katherine Josten took a gigantic leap of faith.

Actually, her decision to launch what amounted to a worldwide grass-roots campaign for peace and unity called the Global Art Project was more like jumping from an airplane without a parachute.

She didn't know if the project would fly or fall flat on its face, yet she gave up her only steady source of income - her part-time teaching job at Pima Community College - to try it.

All she knew was that the Global Art Project was the most important thing she could possibly be doing at the time.

"You knew you were doing your soul-work," she says.

What followed were months of work that left her drained both financially and emotionally. Her own

What: Global Art Project.

When: March-April 1996.

How it works: People of all ages create a work of art expressing their vision of global unity to exchange with a person in another part of the world.

Mailing address: Global Art Project/TAC, P.O. Box 40445, Tucson, AZ 85717.

Phone: 628-8353.

Fee: \$10 donation requested.

artwork has been put on hold, the bulk of it stored in the basement of a downtown warehouse.

"I can't possibly work on that while I'm doing this," Josten says. "It's just totally taken over my life."

The first Global Art Project was a "birthing process" that she says probably aged her 10 years.

Still, she plans to do the whole thing again next year.

In 1994, the project drew 3,600 participants from 19 countries, resulting in the creation of thousands of original works of art expressing global unity, she says. That response convinced her that she needed to repeat the effort in 1996.

"It was just so difficult, getting the first one going, that it seems silly not to do it again now that the hard part's been done," she says.

She expects "three or four times" as many participants in next year's project.

In preparation, Josten is going around giving slide shows of artwork by 1994 participants. One such presentation is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Oct. 1 at St. Francis in the Foothills United Methodist Church, 4625 E. River Road.

In addition, she hopes to have a booklet of 30 examples of the 1994 artwork ready for marketing by Dec. 1. "It feels like the project has really taken on a life of its own," she says.

Josten, 46, runs the Global Art Project from her tiny one-bedroom apartment near the University of Arizona.



A.E. Aralza, The Arizona Daily Star

Katherine Josten will repeat her world art-exchange program next year.

The place is crammed with past and present examples of her art. Large, floor-to-ceiling paintings - which could represent either the cosmos or the inner workings of atoms - line the walls. A flock of abstract birds hangs over a table stacked with correspondence.

For the last 12 years she's been creating a large body of work called "Origins," which she says combines poetry, painting and sculpture to deal with issues of time, space and energy.

"One of the things that it's constantly saying is, 'We are all one,'" she says.

So when she got the idea of the Global Art Project, it seemed like a natural extension of her art. "It was taking these exact same concepts but... it's like turning myself inside-out and making them real in the world."

Josten's idea was fairly straightforward: To get people all over the world to create and exchange their personal visions of global unity. After two years of thinking about it and honing it, she arrived at an

approach that she thought might succeed:

- People who wanted to participate would send Josten their names and addresses.

- She would then match them with a participant in another part of the world.

- Then, in March 1994, each participant would create a work of art expressing global unity.

- The next month, participants would share their artwork first with their communities and then with their partners in another part of the world. The result would be an April filled with "visions of unity simultaneously encircling the globe," as Josten envisioned it.

- And finally, people could send Josten a slide of their artwork to be included in a "slide bank" of global unity.

Simple enough - but how to make it work?

"I just had a typewriter and this idea - I didn't have any contacts or money," she says. "I mean, it's one thing to have an idea, but what're you gonna do with it?"

She heard of something called a "World Clay Stomp," which was to take place in Flagstaff. There, artists from around the world would bring clay from home, put it in a big trough and spend three days stomping and mixing it together, then go home all muddy and filled with feelings of unity.

It seemed just the right place to introduce her project.

So Josten spent three months getting ready. With the help of Michael Mayer, owner of Mayer Graphics, and other volunteers, she put together a brochure, video and banners announcing her project. And she set up a booth in Flagstaff while the artists of the world came to her.

And it worked. She came back to Tucson with a global network of contacts. Now all she needed was some money to make it fly.

No problem, she figured.

With \$1,500 that she borrowed from her parents for seed money, Josten set out to get some grants. She was so certain of success that she took off a semester from teaching to work full time on writing grant applications.

"I thought for sure that this thing - oh, it was so wonderful - I was sure to get a grant."

Wrong.

All the major governmental sources, including the National Endowment for the Arts, turned her down, saying the idea was too grandiose, she says.

She ended up getting only \$1,400, from three agencies: the Tucson-Pima Arts Council, the Cultural Exchange Council of Tucson, and International Funds in Transformative Art. In addition, the non-profit Tucson Arts Coalition agreed to take the project under its umbrella, allowing it to accept tax-deductible donations.

By then it was October 1993, time to start getting the word out if the project were to take place in 1994. "I just made the decision - OK, come hell or high water, with money or without, I'm doing this," Josten

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says.

From the library, she put together a list of major English-language newspapers around the world, along with public-service radio stations. Combining that with her contacts from the Clay Stomp, she sent out hundreds of press releases announcing the project.

Many newspapers treated the release as a cockamamie scheme that went straight into the wastebasket. But stories also appeared everywhere from Thailand and China to Canada.

And the responses started coming in and mushrooming, as people shared the idea with friends. "People all over just really wanted to help," she says.

Josten says there were still nights when she lay awake wondering "Oh God, why am I doing this?" But then, just when she

was hitting a low, a letter would arrive or the phone would ring. And someone would say just the words she needed to keep going.

"I just knew somehow, it was meant to be," she says.

Finally, in the spring of 1994, the payoff came: Artwork from participants started filling Josten's mailbox.

Poetry. Photographs. Tapes of original music, videos of performance art. Slides of crayon drawings by children. An image of a 36-inch quilt.

Plus, there were letters from all over, thanking her for starting the project. "These are the things that kept me going," she says.

"Because by then, I was a stressed-out basket case."

The first project ended up costing \$10,000, Josten says. She had asked participants to contribute \$10, and those donations amounted to about \$5,000. Grants covered another \$1,400. The Photographic Works Lab duplicated the slides for free. The remainder of the funding came from Josten's shallow pockets, she says.

So her decision to repeat the campaign in 1996 wasn't easy.

"Anyone who's ever made a work of art knows you can't do it until you can feel it within yourself first," she says. "So all the

people who did this had to go through the internal process of actually feeling that global unity and peace."

She believes that the worldwide accumulation of thought-energy centering on unity and peace eventually must materialize in some way, although she isn't sure what form it will take.

"It's got to make a difference," she says.