



Richard Smith

Textile artist Rachel Brown, photographed in 2003 when she was named a Taos Living Treasure.

## Taos artists honored

*Fall Arts to present Distinguished Achievement Awards to three women artists*

By Nathan Suzzo

**T**he Distinguished Achievements Award series was established in 2011 as a means of honoring the historic past of Taos as well as recognizing extraordinary contemporary artists. The awards are named after past artists who were exemplary creative figures in their respective fields.

This year's recipients include: Mary Shaffer to receive the Beatrice Mandelman-Melissa Zink Award for mixed media; Mimi Chen Ting to receive the Agnes Martin Award for abstract painting and drawing, and the late Rachel Brown who, through her family, will

receive the Joan Loveless-Rachel Brown Award for fiber and textiles.

The awards ceremony will take place Friday (Sept. 28), 4-6 p.m., in Rio Grande Hall at the Taos Civic Plaza Convention Center, 120 Civic Plaza Drive. Advance tickets are \$25 at the Wilder-Nightingale Gallery, 119 Kit Carson Road, or \$30 at the door.

This event precedes the free public opening of the 2012 Taos Fall Arts Festival.

Each ticket includes two complimentary drinks, appetizers, entertainment by Vick Pfeiffer, and the premiere of the Taos Open and Taos Selects exhibits.

Shaffer's artistic philosophy centers around balance and harmony with the unbending forces of the natural



Mary Shaffer

Courtesy image

Shaffer's artwork is characterized by her meticulous manipulation of a substance that is no less than omnipresent: glass.

world. "My creative process involves working with and understanding the ever-present power of gravity and how it will affect the piece that I am working on," Shaffer said. "You have to work in tandem with nature, not just in art but us as a people and a civilization."

Shaffer's artwork is characterized by her meticulous manipulation of a substance that is no less than omnipresent: glass. Using an extremely high-temperature kiln, Shaffer super heats pieces of glass and sculpts it according to her creative whims. "It's always a challenge to say, I want this form and how do I go about making this shape without touching it?" Shaffer says. "I still learn new things as an artist all the time. I am so delighted to receive the Melissa Zink award and I think the Taos Open reception will be a

lot of fun."

Inspiration can come from an endless number of places and Ting's creative wellspring comes from an interesting source. "I am an NPR (National Public Radio) addict, it keeps me connected to the world," Ting explains. "My art reflects my way of making sense of that which is going on in the world. The forms and shapes of my painting's interact with each other in a way that represent how I interpret what's going on all around us."

Ting was originally born in Shanghai, China, and ventured to the United States in 1965 to attend college in California. "I always took extra art classes on the side while pursuing my major and I realized early on that I couldn't paint with oils," Ting says. "I started to experiment with other mediums before I settled on acrylics. When I start a painting at first, it's very complicated. As I work, I slowly reduce and simplify the piece as I go. Basically it's a reductive process."

Some critics have drawn pronounced comparisons between Ting's painting's and that of iconic painter, Henry Matisse based on the observation that Ting's paintings reflect a pattern of design bare of intricate

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Mimi Chen Ting

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detail. Ting's paintings run the artistic palette between muted earthy tones and higher-contrast pigments while consistently maintaining an organic composition.

"My favorite pieces are generally those that have been the most challenging," Ting says. "I'm so thrilled

and surprised and very grateful to be receiving the Agnes Martin Award.

**Reception**

- **When:** Friday (Sept. 28), 4-6 p.m.
- **Where:** Taos Civic Plaza Convention Center, 120 Civic Plaza Drive
- **Admission:** \$25 advance, \$30 at the door
- **Information:** (575) 758-4648

There are so many fantastic artists in Taos and to be granted this award is truly a privilege." When one runs through a list of artists who have been extraordinarily influential in their respective field of creativity, Brown has, without a doubt, made a truly profound and lasting impact on the art of weaving and tapestry. "She was such an amazing fiber artist," says Browns granddaughter, Teresa Loveless. "She taught so many people how to weave and she really paved the way for future generations to come."

Brown was a resident of Arroyo Seco

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from 1956 until her death on Jan. 31, 2012 at the age of 85. Upon moving to Taos, Brown's life focus became the art of weaving, both as a means of expressing creativity and a way to make a living. From that time onward, Brown taught weaving all the across the U.S. and, in 1978, she published the definitive manual of the discipline, "The Weaving, Spinning, and Dyeing Book." Containing 435 illustrations, the book is considered by many to be the gold standard by which all other publications regarding the subject are compared to.

Brown's posthumous award will be received by Loveless who helps administer the shop Brown founded, Weaving Southwest. "I think it's such an honor for her to receive this award," Loveless says. "She basically changed the way people view weaving and turned it into a contemporary art form."