

SUZAN FRECON RECEIVES ARTISTS' LEGACY FOUNDATION 2016 ARTIST AWARD

Unrestricted gift of \$25,000 given to an accomplished painter or sculptor where evidence of the hand is a significant factor in making art

Oakland, California—September 26, 2016—Artists' Legacy Foundation Executive Director Pauline Shaver announced today that painter Suzan Frecon, noted for her large abstract oil paintings, is the recipient of the 2016 Artist Award. The Artist Award is an unrestricted gift of \$25,000 given annually to an accomplished painter or sculptor where evidence of the hand is a significant factor in making art. This year is the 10th Anniversary of the Artist Award.



Suzan Frecon, *book of paint*, 2015
Oil on linen, two panels, 108 x 87 3/8 inches
Courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner, New York/London

In the late 1990s, painter Squeak Carnwath, sculptor Viola Frey, and community advocate Gary Knecht created Artists' Legacy Foundation to encourage artists to think about their legacies and how their estates might support other artists. Viola Frey (d. 2004) became a Legacy Artist after her death; her bequest launched the Artist Award.

Painters and sculptors are anonymously nominated for the annual Artist Award and candidates are unaware that they are under consideration. Nominators and jurors are distinguished thinkers and makers with a depth of expertise in their milieus and fields. The 2016 panel of jurors included: Chief Curator at the Modern Art Museum of Forth Worth Michael Auping, painter Jane Hammond and sculptor Suzanne Caporaël.

“Honored,” said Frecon (b. 1941). “The recognition of your peers is so important. If your peers respect your work, that is really wonderful.” Frecon, who is politically and environmentally active, said she is exploring what to do with the \$25,000 and may donate it to an effort or organization that connects art and society, “especially in these dire times when human beings need art.” She recalled 20th century poet, playwright and director Bertolt Brecht’s remark that, “Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.”

Frecon is acclaimed for her complex, transporting abstract oil paintings and watercolors that reflect formal interests in color and stroke. Her immersive works, composed with subtle, interacting arrangements of color, are meticulously planned and includes pigments she grinds herself. Roberta Smith of *The New York Times* asserted that the “physicality of the work stems from Ms. Frecon’s earthy color sense [and] are always



Suzan Frecon, *earth takes its guidelines*, 2014
oil on linen, two panels, 108 x 87 3/8 inches
Courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner, New York/London

clearly handmade, painted with a meditative quality that evokes Morandi.” Carol Diehl, remarking on the intensity of color and surface wrote in *ARTNews*: Her “edges are the accumulation of many passes of the brush—a minimalism achieved by maximalism.” On the occasion of Frecon’s inclusion in the 2010 Whitney Biennial, Todd Levin in *Flash Art*, said, “Frecon, at almost 70, is still a hotshot” and enthused that her works “show the extent of what can be done in painting.”

On the topic of her hand in her work, Frecon asserted: “I need to mix the colors myself; I need to know how the colors feel—I need to be in touch with everything I do.”

“An austere sensuality,” said Hammond. “When you look at the pigment in her works, you feel the minerality of the paint.”

“She has talent, commitment to that talent, and her commitment has endured long enough to serve as inspirational to others,” said Caporael.

“These are old school abstractions that seem completely fresh,” said Auping. “The paintings have a quiet strength and sureness that comes from her long experience working with the medium of paint and watercolor, knowing their material qualities and her

own nervous system very precisely. The edge of every color and line reflects a human rhythm and touch that seems so honest in their insightful imperfections, yet exactly right.”

The Artist Award is designed to encourage professional enrichment, while allowing recipients to spend more creative time in their studios. There are no restrictions on the use of the funds by the recipient.

10th Anniversary of the Artist Award

Shaver also announced today that the 10th Anniversary of the Artist Award will be recognized with a special video documentary that explores the pioneering, physically inventive, and tactile Artist Award recipients over the last decade, including last year’s recipient, Jim Nutt, noted for his intricate and psychological portraits of imaginary women and whom Ken Johnson of *The New York Times* has called “a supremely elegant and inventive stylist.”

Said Shaver: “The Artist Award recognizes achievement in work made by the hand, along with demonstrated professional accomplishment. It is a legacy award and a philanthropic program of the Foundation.”

A complete list of previous recipients of the Artist Award and jurors who selected them may be found at artistslegacyfoundation.org.

About Suzan Frecon

Born in Mexico, Pennsylvania, Suzan Frecon lives and works in New York. After earning her degree in fine arts from the Pennsylvania State University, she spent three years at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Frecon has exhibited widely in the United States and internationally. In 2008, her work was the subject of a major solo exhibition, *form, color, illumination: Suzan Frecon painting*, at The Menil Collection in Houston, Texas, which traveled to Kunstmuseum Bern in Switzerland. She has participated in a number of group exhibitions such as the 2000 and 2010 Whitney Biennial. Permanent collections which hold works by the artist include the Art Institute of Chicago; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts;

Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland; The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Since 2008, her work has been represented by David Zwirner, New York/London.

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About Artists' Legacy Foundation

Artists' Legacy Foundation stewards the work of Legacy Artists and facilitates their posthumous philanthropy; recognizes outstanding painters and sculptors through awards and grants; and serves as an educational resource for artists, scholars, and the general public.