



## **BACKGROUND**

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## **ABOUT THE OJAI STUDIO ARTISTS** **Inspiration to Create – and Give Back to the Community**

Nestled within geographically unique east-west mountain ranges, the Ojai Valley has been a spiritual and artistic mecca for over 100 years. In fact, Native Americans recognized the area as a sacred place thousands of years earlier. Today, Ojai continues to offer the serenity, beauty and inspiration that trigger the best work of world class studio artists.

More than a quarter of a century ago, three nationally recognized Ojai artists – Bert Collins, Marta Nelson, and Gayel Childress – were motivated to invite art lovers and collectors into the working studios of many of Ojai’s artists, to share a weekend celebrating art and creativity. The first year, 24 artists opened their studios and 20 more held a joint exhibition at the Ojai Art Center. From this core group, the Ojai Studio Artists (OSA) was formed.

Since then, the prestige of what is now an annual event has grown. The second weekend in October has become a premiere art experience as thousands tour the workspaces of the renowned Ojai Studio Artists, wandering at their own pace though the studios and visiting with Ojai’s finest artists. To the visitors, it’s a rare experience to see and discuss work in progress as well as on display. It is a unique opportunity for those who wish to expand their collections, and a precious occasion for one-on-one communication with the gifted artists.

The allure of the Ojai Valley with its rich art history lends itself to casual visits where collectors and art enthusiasts can linger at the working studios. Thirty-nine OSA members will open their studios to guests this year and will be available to discuss their creations. A catalogue and map to all studios – many located in well-hidden nooks surrounded by incomparable beauty – accompany each ticket purchase.

Stopping at studios spread throughout the high mountain valley, visitors take this self-paced tour over the charming back roads of Ojai to view current work, with the opportunity to purchase original artwork directly at its source. Artworks on display include paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, ceramics, jewelry, photographs, assemblage and mixed media. Each participating artist will also have one piece on exhibit where people can view their work prior to

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making the tour. This exhibit will be held at the Ojai Art Center, 113 South Montgomery Street, in downtown Ojai.

In addition to the Tour, OSA is heavily involved with giving back to the community that nurtures them. Over the years, the group began presenting scholarships to local art students to help with their continuing education. These monies came from Tour ticket sales, private donations and proceeds from a silent auction of member's artwork during the Tour. Including 2009, OSA will have given more than \$133,780 in scholarships and donations to qualified art students, artists, and arts organizations in the Ojai Valley. They have purchased art books for local libraries, offered free workshops for children, supported public art projects and art outreach for people of all ages, and worked within the community to promote the visual arts.

In late 2006, Ojai Studio Artists incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community education organization, working year round to promote art awareness. With the decline in public money for arts education, OSA has taken up the cause of promoting the next generation of artists and bringing the love of art to the region. They have developed outreach programs to students, master classes and lessons for seniors.

To support their mission "to encourage interest and excellence in the arts," an annual exhibit is held at the Ojai Valley Historical Society & Museum where the work of OSA members is displayed in a professional grade installation, and scholarships are awarded. The exhibit Made in Ojai VII (see [http://www.ojaistudioartists.org/made\\_in\\_ojai.html](http://www.ojaistudioartists.org/made_in_ojai.html)) will be held from June 4<sup>th</sup> to July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009 with proceeds benefiting the museum. At the opening reception on June 6<sup>th</sup>, the scholarship winners are presented and awarded. The winners' artwork is included in the exhibition and provides extraordinary public exposure for emerging talent.

For more information on OSA, its individual members, and its programs, please visit [www.ojaistudioartists.org](http://www.ojaistudioartists.org).

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