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*Photos and complete biographies available on request*

**2007 TEXAS ARTIST AND PATRON OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED**

***DIXIE FRIEND GAY AND GUS KOPRIVA TO BE HONORED***

**HOUSTON** (February 7, 2007) Art League Houston proudly announced today the selections of **Dixie Friend Gay** as the 2007 Texas Artist of the Year and **Gus Kopriva** as Texas Patron of the Year. Each year, Art League Houston honors those whose work or patronage has had a significant and positive impact on contemporary visual art in Texas.

“Dixie Friend Gay and Gus Kopriva are tremendous assets to the arts in Texas and we are delighted to have them as our 2007 honorees,” said Billie Chasen, Art League Houston President. “They demonstrate distinctive achievements in visual art that we celebrate with this award. Both have worked for the promotion of art to the community and used their talent to widen the audience exposed to great art from Houston to Shanghai.”

In 1983 Art League Houston created the Texas Artist of the Year award as a dynamic and informative annual project documenting Texas art history. Through this project, tribute is paid to outstanding members of the visual art community. Twenty-three artists and three patrons have received the award since its inception.

Dixie Friend Gay’s work has been shown regionally, nationally and internationally, and is represented in corporate, individual and museum collections in Texas and across the country. Her work has been featured in numerous museum exhibitions, including the Bronx Museum in New York, the Art Museum of Southeast Texas in Beaumont, the Amarillo Art Museum, and the Austin Museum of Art at Laguna Gloria, among others. She is also known for her public art projects including *Houston Bayou* at George Bush Intercontinental Airport, Terminal B (2002) and *Sun Temple* at Sylvan Rodriguez Park in Clear Lake.

Ms. Gay currently is working on projects for the Port of Miami, the new Indianapolis Airport and the Woodlands, and is a finalist for the Houston Metro Solutions Public Art Program. Dixie has been the

recipient of numerous awards including the 2006 Artist of the Year from the American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter, the 2003 Artist of the Year from Texas Accountants and Lawyers for the Arts, the 2003 Texas State Artist of the Year (Three Dimensional) Texas Commission on the Arts, and the prestigious New American Talent 19 award (2004). Additionally, her civic art project *Houston Bayou* was recognized in the *2002 Art in America's Art in Review*. Gay grew up on a ranch in rural Oklahoma, lived in the NYC area for nearly a decade, and moved to Houston in 1989.

Trained as an engineer, Gus Kopriva began his visual arts career in 1981 as a Board Member of the original Lawndale Art Annex at the University of Houston working with artist James Surls. He balances a career as an Engineering Director for Dow Chemical with an equally active career in the arts. He is a fervent collector of Pre Columbian, Contemporary, German Expressionism, French Symbolism, and American WPA art, has curated over fifty regional, national and international exhibitions, and is the owner of Redbud Gallery. Kopriva is currently organizing exhibitions focusing on Texas visual art for museums in Cuba, China, Peru, Germany and Texas. He has served on a number of boards in a variety of capacities, including Treasurer for the former Houston Municipal Arts Commission, Project Manager for the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art, and Board Member Houston Leipzig Sister City Association, among others. In addition to owning a gallery, as well as curating, collecting, lecturing and serving on boards, Gus has organized major fundraising efforts for the arts, including "Project Storm" a fundraiser for Katrina Needs, and has published exhibition catalogues including "Houston Works" for the Leipzig-Houston Sister City Association and "Broken Brushes: From the Kaiser to Hitler, German Paper works from the Kopriva Collection." Born in Baden-Baden, Germany as a U.S. citizen in 1948, Gus has lived in Houston since 1962. He has been married for 35 years to a former Art League Houston Texas Artist of the Year (2001) Sharon Kopriva.

"The exuberance that Dixie Friend Gay and Gus Kopriva have brought to contemporary art in Texas was a key reason they were selected," said Debbie McNulty, Art League Houston Executive Director. "We are committed to making participation in contemporary visual art available to our community through our exhibitions, outreach program and Art League School. I can't think of a better way to inspire people and families into participation than by paying tribute to the talent and generosity of these two honorees."

As Texas Artist of the Year, Dixie Friend Gay will be featured in an exhibition at Art League Houston this fall. Both awardees will be celebrated at the annual gala which will be held in their honor in November.

The *Inversion -> Conversion* Capital Campaign has been supported principally by The Houston Endowment, Inc., The Brown Foundation, Inc., Kevin & Laurie Foxx, Wortham Foundation, Inc., John P. McGovern Foundation, Vinson & Elkins, Sara and Bill Morgan, Peggy and Allan Port, Michael Cordua, Billie and Marv Chasen and nearly 200 individual donors.

Art League Houston programming is made possible through the estate of William G. Daugherty, The Houston Endowment, Inc., City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council of Houston and Harris County, Joan Hohlt & J. Roger Wich, Kevin & Laurie Foxx, Art Colony Association/ Bayou City Art Festivals, The American-Scandinavian Foundation, Drew Baird, Becker Family Foundation, the Ann Bengtson Memorial Fund, Norman & Kelly Bering, Jack & Annis Bowen Foundation, Brad & Leslie Bucher, Marv & Billie Chasen, Moriah & Rod Crosby, Darrell & Peggy Delahoussaye, Ray C. Fish Foundation, Hugh & Berthica Fitzsimons, Kat Gallagher, Alice C. Boyd Gano, Courtney Glasscock, Oliver & Nancy Goldesberry, Nick & Candice Goodwin, Rob Greenstein, James & Ann Harithas, International Bank of Commerce, Kinder Foundation, Susan Magnani, Mark & Gretchen Mazziotti, McCoy Workplace Solutions, John P. McGovern Foundation, Betty Moody & Bill Steffy, National MS Society Lone Star Chapter, Mark Nitcholas, Don & Crystal Owens, Allan & Peggy Port, Royal Norwegian Consulate General, Mike Rudelson, Louisa Stude Sarofim, Fred & Wendy Schiller, Tahamia Spain, Steve & Susie Streller, Texas Art Supply, Texas Commission on the Arts, Top Drawer Lingerie, Jim & Beth Wiggins, Nina & Michael Zilkha, our sponsors, members and volunteers.

***About Art League Houston***

Art League Houston cultivates awareness, appreciation and accessibility of contemporary visual art within the community for its cultural enrichment. For 58 years Art League Houston has served the greater Houston region through exhibition, education and community outreach programs. To find out more about Art League Houston or the Texas Artist of the Year Award visit: [www.artleaguehouston.org](http://www.artleaguehouston.org).

***About Inversion -> Conversion***

Art League Houston is in the midst of a capital campaign to raise \$1 Million for Phase II construction in order to complete its new Art League Houston School, to improve the exterior site and existing gallery, and to begin an endowment. Located on Montrose Boulevard, the new School offers more space for educational and outreach programs. The 6,000-square-foot contemporary building also includes an area that houses a tenant operated coffee shop, called Inversion Coffee.

*Art League Houston is a 501(c)(3) charitable, nonprofit corporation. Contributions to Art League Houston are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.*

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