

ARTS & CULTURE

The McNay Print Fair: A Thriving San Antonio Tradition



ROCÍO GUENTHER 

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Courtesy / McNay Art Museum

Museum visitors look through various works of art during the 2016 McNay Print Fair.

Now in its 21st year, the McNay Art Museum's popular Print Fair will once again enthrall people of all ages this weekend with its selection of unique prints, drawings, and photographs catered for every taste and budget.

A dozen dealers from around the U.S. will converge inside the McNay's Leeper Auditorium for the two day-fair, which will take place Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday from noon-5 p.m.

"The fair has become a beloved San Antonio tradition and in the last 20 years it has been instrumental in growing private and public collections in the thriving city of San Antonio," said McNay Director Richard Aste, who was a former art dealer himself. "Visitors to this year's Print Fair will see, once again, the McNay's commitment to excellence in everything we do, from the art galleries represented to the artworks they've very carefully selected to speak across interests and budgets."

Entrance to the print fair is free with museum admission.

Thousands of prints will be available for purchase at the event, which will provide an opportunity for both novice and seasoned collectors to converse with dealers about artwork that piques their interest. For those who remember the early days of the print fair and continue to attend today, the event marks the beginning of a growing interest for art collecting.



Courtesy / McNay Art Museum
People gather for the 2016 Print Fair at the McNay Art Museum.

Patricia Ruiz-Healy, founder of Ruiz-Healy Art, told the *Rivard Report* that the fair is well respected in the Southwest region. Ruiz-Healy started studying prints 30 years ago. She founded her gallery in 2004 with a strong print inventory that included pieces from Mexican masters like Rufino Tamayo and Francisco Toledo. Little by little, she has tried to bring prints from such artists to the McNay Print Fair.

“We get collectors from Austin and Houston, so it’s a very important regional fair since material is brought from many good galleries,” Ruiz-Healy said. “All the dealers are scholars so it’s very good for education purposes, and they don’t mind answering questions. It’s my 10th year participating and I have gained so much knowledge by working with dealers from New York and other places across the country – some have been incredible mentors.”

This year’s dealers will bring a variety of works to the San Antonio community – from old master prints to contemporary photographs and drawings. Below is a list of all the participants:

The Annex Galleries, Armstrong Fine Art, Catherine Burns Gallery, William P. Carl Fine Prints Davidson Galleries, Lawrence Markey, Ruiz-Healy Art , Mary Ryan Gallery, M. Lee Stone Fine Prints, William R. Talbot Fine Art, Tandem Press, Susan Teller Gallery, Warnock Fine Arts

McNay Prints and Drawings Curator Lyle Williams has spearheaded the fair since its inception in 1996 when William Chiego, Aste's predecessor, was at the helm of the museum. Williams will soon celebrate his 25th anniversary working at the McNay.

Printmaking is just another form of expression for artists, Williams told the *Rivard Report*, and many artists consider it equal to painting and sculpture. Printmaking is unique, he added, because prints can exist in multiples even if the artist intended for them to be original works of art.

"There are certain qualities of lines and tone that you can only achieve with different kinds of printmaking by using wood cut, etching, or lithograph," Williams said. "In terms of value, a lot of people always think they are down on the totem pole, and they do tend to be more affordable, but in some cases it can be worth more than a painting that an artist has done." Ruiz-Healy agrees there's a lot of misconceptions when it comes to printmaking.

"Some people think it's just printed on a machine or something, but the concept is original," Ruiz-Healy said. "We don't work with artists that produce prints by duplicating a painting for example, we work with artists that start with an original concept to do a print. They usually work at a workshop with a master printer to achieve what they are trying to do."



Courtesy / McNay Art Museum
A woman peruses the prints at the 2016 McNay Art Museum Print Fair.

Williams said that several dealers have remained avid participants in the fair since it first started 21 years ago. Beyond that, they have become a part of the local community.

"Our visitors have become friends with the dealers and when they travel they go and visit them," Williams said. "[The Print Fair] is about art, but it's more than that. Young collectors could choose to buy an expensive poster with a quality frame but [they can find an] original print and work of art at the fair – the goal is to encourage art collecting here in San Antonio."

Lee Stone, owner of California-based M. Lee Stone Fine Prints, has been an art dealer for 40 years. This year will mark his sixth year participating in the Print Fair. He told the *Rivard Report* Wednesday that many dealers are just waiting for someone to drop out of the McNay's dealer list and for a slot to open up so they can participate – that's how popular it is.

“They do it right at the McNay – they treat us well and the museum helps and assists us when it comes to hanging our work on the walls,” Stone said. “You can’t say a bad word about this fair. The supporters of the McNay museum are there and they can be on the floor all the time ... it attracts many people and the next thing you know they are joining as members [of the museum].”

The beauty of the fair, Stone added, is that people can come and see work that is worth \$100 or work that might be worth \$50-60,000.

“People can walk around and pick up and handle artwork that could be in a museum,” Stone said. “That way you get an idea of what you like and what you don’t like. There are great things in a museum, but you can’t take it off the wall and hold it in your hands.”