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SAAM's Research Service and Preservation Initiatives

Receive National Awards

The Smithsonian American Art Museum received two national awards for its ongoing initiatives. The American Library Association (ALA) awarded the museum's Ask Joan of Art ® service the Thomson Gale Award for Excellence in Reference and Adult Services. The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) honored Susan Nichols, the museum's Lunder Education chair, for her work with the Save Outdoor Sculpture! (SOS!) program.

"These initiatives are vital to the Smithsonian American Art Museum and its constituents. The Ask Joan of Art service is an invaluable resource to the museum community and the general public alike," said Elizabeth Broun, the museum's Margaret and Terry Stent Director.

"The Save Outdoor Sculpture! initiative is part of the museum's long-standing commitment to documenting and preserving America's public sculptures that illuminate the rich collective history of America."

Begun in 1993, Ask Joan of Art is a digital reference service that answers questions from the public on American art and artists. Developed and maintained by museum staff, the service is the longest running arts-based digital reference service. SAAM research librarians have answered more than 50,000 questions since the service was established. The Reference and User Services Association, a division of ALA, recognized the museum for developing an imaginative and unique library resource to meet patrons' reference needs.

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works recognized Susan Nichols, the founding director of SOS!, for her "remarkable achievement" on behalf of the program. Jointly sponsored by the Smithsonian American Art Museum and Heritage Preservation, the initiative provides conservation assessment and maintenance training and confers achievement awards to individuals, nonprofit organizations and state and local agencies supporting preservation of their local sculptures.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum's research programs include fellowships for pre- and postdoctoral scholars, extensive photographic collections documenting American art and artists and unparalleled art research databases. An active publications program of books, catalogs and the journal "American Art" complements the museum's exhibitions and educational programs.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum collection began with gifts of art donated to the federal government in 1829 and has evolved into one of the world's most important American art holdings, with approximately 41,000 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. The museum's main building, a National Historic Landmark located at 8th and F streets N.W., is currently under renovation. The museum will re-open in July 2006.

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