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### A League Of Their Own

By Gabriel Kiley, Kristin Stefek &amp; Jennifer Dulin

From Joan of Arc to Oprah Winfrey, women have left an indelible mark on history. Women also serve in prominent positions in all aspects of the art and framing industry. Their contribution, the editors of DECOR believe, should not go unnoticed. Because March is National Women's History Month, we're highlighting five women who are making a difference in the art and framing community:

- Jaime Dowell, owner of [Studio 7 Fine Arts](#), Pleasanton, Calif.
- Joanne Chappell, founder and owner of [Editions Limited](#), Emeryville, Calif.
- Connie Hartman, co-owner of [Hartman Plastics](#), Honey Brook, Pa.
- Jennifer Garant, [Wild Apple](#) artist, Bloomington, Ind.
- Kate McCarthy, senior vice president of marketing, [Crescent Cardboard Company](#), Wheeling, Ill.

This article represents just a small segment of women who proudly serve the marketplace. DECOR salutes all of the women making a difference in everything they do.

#### Jaime Dowell, Owner of Studio 7 Fine Arts

#### A Woman Driven By Family

For Jaime Dowell, being a woman isn't just about being male or female. It's a calling, and in many ways, it's helped define her path through life.

Dowell's artistic mother and sister, as well as her own passion for art, led her to Studio 7 Fine Arts in Pleasanton, Calif., in 2000, her mother's gallery, where she worked as a bookkeeper.

"We're really close," Jaime, 27, says. "Being women without a lot of male influence has made us who we are."

Although the Dowell women have a strong bond, they each have distinct personalities and talents that complement one another to make the gallery what it is today. Jaime's mother, Terry Dowell, is a talented



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*Jaime Dowell (right) with mother Terry Dowell (middle) and sister Linsey Dowell (left) in Studio 7 Fine Arts, Pleasanton, Calif.*

custom framer with a great deal of intuition when it comes to buying and selling art. Jaime's younger sister, Linsey Dowell, is a gifted painter who has a knack for catering to clients' needs. Jaime is known for her keen business sense, which is what eventually lead her to the head of the business.

"When it comes to the nitty-gritty business things, I tend to lead the pack," she says. "But I tend to get too numbers-oriented sometimes, and they (mother and sister) keep me grounded."

The trio successfully ran the gallery as equal partners for several years, but 2006 has marked a change in the Dowell women's lives. Jaime now will be sole owner of Studio 7 Fine Arts while her mother and sister take a lesser role to pursue careers as professional artists.

"I love the business so much that I just didn't want to walk away," Jaime says. "We still have to find our roles and get used to me being the 'head honcho.'"

Her assertive nature and strong work ethic no doubt will make this transition easier, but Jaime has experienced times in the business world where she's felt she had to prove something to the men of the industry, "partially because I'm a young business owner, and partially because I am a woman."

Studio 7 Fine Arts, on the other hand, has been well received in the community as a women-run, family owned gallery. It has a strong handle on the residential market and is known for catering to customers while maintaining strong relationships with their artists.

Jaime says the key to a career in the art world is multi-tasking and a willingness to wear "many hats." But she also strives for balance in her life. "Don't let your business be your all; make room for the important things like family and friends," she says. "If that means that you are closed an extra day during the week or bring less to the bottom line, so be it. At least you know you're leading a well-balanced life that is fulfilling."

### **Joanne Chappell, Owner/Founder of Editions Limited**

#### **Raising The Bar For Women Who Follow**

Throughout her professional life, Joanne Chappell has surrounded herself with other talented, driven women, and the concept has paid off.

When she started Editions Limited, an art publishing company based in Emeryville, Calif., the majority of her employees were women. And in looking back, she cites it as one of the keys to her success. "I have great men (working for me), but we are definitely a women-populated business," she says.



*Joanne Chappell (left) and Christy Carleton compare the latest proof and original art of Janet O'Neil.*

She started 38 years ago in the industry as a gallery owner in Indianapolis, but her passion for art started long before then. She majored in Fine Art at Indiana University and threw herself into anything art-related, including painting, sculpting and art history. "I was not a practical person (in college)," she says.

But practicality played a bigger role when she wanted to make her way into the art-

publishing world in the late '70s, a time when Chappell says the "old boys club" still had some influence. A single mother of three, she couldn't even get a line of credit from the bank at first. "It was one foot in front of the other for a long time," she says.

When Chappell first launched Editions Limited, her accountant wouldn't even allow her to have a credit card because "she'd just go shopping with it." But Chappell put her foot down when she got locked out of her hotel room while attending Artexpo New York because she was paying cash every night. Her accountant got her a credit card the next week.

Since then, Chappell says she's seen attitudes toward businesswomen improve, and with this improvement has come changes in the art and framing industry. She's seen the time that a poster can stay classic reduce dramatically over the years and cites the constant need for fresh trends by big-box retailers as the driving force of change. "The minute the ink is dry, we're already doing the next line."

But Chappell likes the fast-paced environment and the challenge of finding the next "big thing." And finding the new trend before it finds her has been one of the secrets to Editions Limited, the owner says. As an owner of several galleries before her publishing company, Chappell knew how to find what people wanted. "You see people come into your gallery, and they gravitate to certain things; that's what I started to publish."

Chappell's dedication to the art world had a huge impact on the three children she practically raised in her galleries. Her sons each have successful careers in the art business, and her daughter is a journalist.

Chappell and her children know she's a person who never slows down. "I enjoy art, my family and my grandchildren, and I want to do everything I can to give back to those who aren't as lucky as I am. I support women. I know how hard it can be, and I like to see women make it."

### **Connie Hartman, Co-Owner of Hartman Plastics**

#### **It's Full Speed Ahead For This Tireless Businesswoman**



*Connie Hartman, co-owner of Hartman Plastics*

Connie Hartman has a tough time doing nothing. From the time she wakes up every morning at 5 a.m., to the time she crashes at 10 p.m., she's on the move, filling every nook and cranny of her day with productive tasks.

After hitting the treadmill at 6 a.m., it's off to work at Hartman Plastics, the company she co-owns with her husband, Bob Hartman. It's the place that she's dedicated her past 20 years to, and it's the place she'll continue to work tirelessly at as long as she can.

"Retirement's not on my agenda," she says.

Hartman's corporate career began in 1985 after she left her 15-year job as a first-grade teacher. Her husband had founded Hartman Plastics, and she wanted to join him in the business venture. At first, she tackled administrative work, as she adjusted from a classroom to a boardroom environment. The transition proved a bit challenging, mostly because she was new to the industry. "You have to know an industry to do it well," she says. "That's something I learned."

The fact that she was a woman in a male-dominated field didn't bother her much, though at times, it was a bit intimidating. At trade shows, the number of the suits and ties far outweighed the skirts and heels. Never one for shoulder pads, Hartman pressed on in her own right. The more involved she became, the more her confidence increased.

During the years, she helped to nearly triple Hartman Plastics in size. In the beginning, the company extruded polystyrene for meat trays and egg cartons in a 25,000-square-foot facility. Today, after two expansions, Hartman Plastics manufactures Hartboard®, a full-line of quality foam-centered boards, from a 60,000-square-foot facility.

Hartman now deals directly with customers, an aspect of her job she's most passionate about. Taking care of customers, the way she likes to take care of customers, fills up most of the workday, she says. Hartman's daughter, Debi McGowan, who also works for the company, says her mother "takes customers' interests to heart. She's very dedicated to making the customer happy. If there's ever a problem, she addresses it immediately." Building relationships with clients is one of the keys to success, Hartman believes. Another thing that keeps her on top of the game is her three-tiered philosophy: truth, integrity and loyalty. And, she's a firm believer in brevity: "Just tell me the bottom line. That's my favorite saying."

Hartman admires other women who have advanced in the art and framing industry. "Women are doing a terrific job in sales, management, purchasing and in anything they do," she says. "They're very prominent these days."

The woman she idolizes most, though, is in another field. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice embodies the discipline and drive Hartman strives for. "I admire that she gets up at 5 a.m., she exercises, she's a pianist, and she does an eight-to-12-hour day, and then fits in so much more."

Hartman wishes she too could fit more into a day. A full agenda motivates her to keep going. "I like to be busy," she says.

It's relaxing that's been her biggest challenge.

### **Jennifer Garant, Wild Apple Artist**

#### **Showing Compassion For New Orleans Hurricane Victims**

Canadian-born artist Jennifer Garant, like people across the world, watched in disbelief as

the devastation of Hurricane Katrina unfolded in late summer of 2005.

As she thought about her friends and their families struggling in New Orleans, she also thought, "That could have been me."

Last May, Garant and her husband, Tadd Garant, sought to purchase a home in New Orleans in nearby Slidell. The couple already had a timeshare in the Crescent City and wanted to spend even more time in the Big Easy. The historic city served as inspiration for Garant, who took studio vacations there for 20 years to capture the sights and sounds of the Big Easy to serve as inspirations for the characters in her art.



*Jennifer Garant, Wild Apple artist*

The home purchase, however, didn't work out. The couple moved to Bloomington, Ind., instead. Regardless, Garant decided to do something to help New Orleans. Starting last September, Garant is donating 12 months' worth of all her print royalties from Wild Apple Graphics to hurricane relief through the American Red Cross.

"For me, it was just a no-brainer," Garant says about her decision.

John Chester, president of Wild Apple, says it's rare for an artist to donate all publishing royalties to a dedicated cause when the artist would usually bestow royalties for a specific print. "Jennifer has a big heart," Chester says.

Garant's passion for New Orleans stems from its rich cultural history. To her, it's more than just the site of the world's largest Mardi Gras celebration.

"New Orleans is my favorite city in the world because of the people that make it up," says Garant, a native of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada. "It's filled with artists, musicians, people with millions of stories floating around. It's conducive for thinking and creative people."

Garant's heart continues to ache for the people of New Orleans and others along the

Gulf Coast affected by Hurricane Katrina. She was upset by the initial treatment of citizens by government officials.

"I was sick to my stomach," Garant says when watching the images on TV. "There were only so many people with the means to leave. Those who had to stay behind, many of them were led into human warehouses (Superdome, convention center). I've heard stories of my friends and their families in New Orleans who had no choice but staying. It was horrifying."

Garant also is taking her compassion to another level. She's planning an art auction featuring artists across the globe. Her goal is to establish a fund to aid visual artists in the New Orleans area.

"I hope my efforts will help pull more artists back in the city," Garant says. "A lot of artists, musicians and chefs are moving away."

Garant says people can't forget about the devastation in the long run and hopes the awareness generated by her donations and upcoming auction help in that process.

"It gets very frustrating and confusing for people in New Orleans that are trying to rebuild their lives," Garant says. "Some people are still trying to keep it in the forefront. It's very necessary. If it's not in front of you, not impacting your life, you tend to forget about it."

Reflecting on National Women's History Month, Garant says several female artists, such as Georgia O'Keeffe, Emily Carr and Tamara de Lempicka, have inspired her.

"At one point in time, it was a man's world no matter what business you were talking about," Garant says. "Today, art, like most things, there isn't that boundary any more."

"Today, the image speaks more than the person creating the image. The average art purchaser is savvier, and that's having a big impact, too."

#### **Kate McCarthy, senior vice president of marketing for Crescent Cardboard**

#### **Strongly Committed To The Art and Framing Industry**



*Kate McCarthy, senior vice president of marketing for Crescent.*

Kate McCarthy's recipe for a successful career: "Take your job seriously, apply yourself, and become passionate about what you're doing."

She is the perfect testament to how far this credo can take a person.

McCarthy currently serves as the senior vice president of marketing for Crescent Cardboard, a leading global marketer of products for the creation, presentation and enhancement of art and photography, based in Wheeling, Ill. Her professional voyage began at an art supply shop in Denver, where she landed her first job. From there, she moved into a marketing position at a major art supplies manufacturer, and then took on the same role at other companies in the art and framing industry. Before joining Crescent, she served as the vice president of marketing for another leading supplier to the industry.

"I've been in the art and framing industry in some capacity from the get go," she says. "I've been lucky."

Lucky, in her mind, because the marketing positions she's filled have allowed her to use her strengths in creativity and business matters.

“I’ve always told people that work with me that we have the best job because we get to use both sides of the brain—the side that deals with profitability and the side that deals with creativity,” she says. “It’s a well-rounded position to be in. The creative side is the most appealing to me, but you really have to balance it with good business sense.”

This is something McCarthy does well, says one of her co-workers, Jack Dempsey, a spokesman for Crescent. “Kate’s good at looking at the whole picture,” he says. “I think that’s what makes Kate effective at what she does.”

In her current role, McCarthy is responsible for product management, new categories, new product introduction, marketing materials and communications, customer service and the company’s Custom Framers Support group. These days, McCarthy is dedicating much of her time to launching and carrying out company initiatives that aid custom framers with their businesses. Help often comes in the form of information about marketing, color trends or merchandising.

“Crescent has committed itself to the art and framing industry,” she says.

So too has McCarthy. “I’m passionate about going to work,” she says. “I love what I do.”

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