

"Baldwin gave me a sense of 'what could be' – an ideal towards which I have striven, and just as a plant keeps putting down its roots, this sentiment will continue to grow deeper in my heart for as long as I live."

## Preserving Nature Through Art



**Matilda Lancaster Essig '76**

2011 ALUMNAE AWARD WINNER

Everyone tells you to do something you're passionate about. But, what do you do when your passions are two completely different things – like art and the environment? In the case of Tilda Essig, you combine them. You make art out of the environment that you care so much about.

Tilda has combined her two, seemingly disparate, passions in life into one meaningful career. An accomplished artist, she has focused on the environmental conservation of temperate and tropical forests, the Sonoran Desert, and most recently native grasses as the inspiration for her work. Her art clearly represents her interest in the environment, but beyond that, also her desire to make others aware of and connected to the world that surrounds them.

"I look very closely at the ornate characters of one particular biotic community – the native grasses – the subtle and often overlooked keystone species that comprise the open spaces of the American west, and I create large format portraits of them, so that they can speak for themselves, directly to the viewer," explains Tilda. "That viewer may be a gallery director, museum curator, a private or corporate collector, and it may also be a rancher or a farmer, who may never have set foot in an institution of 'higher culture' but whose culture, as a steward of the land, has enormous relevance for the future, both of our food supply and our nation, and whose message, in turn, becomes part of my message."

Tilda received her B.A. from Reed College, and was trained in classical painting and drawing at the Art Students League of New York. After 10 years of working in Natural Science Illustration in the Sonoran Desert, she

began to use digital technology to explore the diversity of open space in the West.

Exhibitions of her work, some spanning several years, have included traveling exhibits throughout the tri-national Sonoran Desert bioregion. Tilda's work is in private and corporate collections, national parks and wildlife refuges, and has been shown in New Mexico, the north rim of the Grand Canyon, Kansas, Iowa, Mexico, and the John James Audubon Center in Pennsylvania. Her clients have included Dr. Jane Goodall, National Geographic, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and Oxford University Press, among others. In 2012, Tilda will expand her reach with a residency at the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie in Nebraska.

As inspiration for her art, Tilda has been a practicing restorationist, working to heal grasslands in Arizona that have been over-grazed. Drawing on her agricultural knowledge, using rotational grazing methods, she experienced firsthand the willing resilience of natural systems. As Tilda explains, "Approached with reverence, and vision, the creativity of good stewardship becomes an art as well."

—By Margaretta Walton '97, Chair of the Awards Committee



Riding Out into the Apache Highlands



Mandala Award – Class of 1971

Row 1 – left to right Jan Pethick, Anne Shoemaker, Ruth Fackenthal, Andrea Hammerschmidt Felkins, Kathryn Roth, Joan Steinmeyer Rosenberg

Row 2 – Martha Craumer, Cheri Deal, Maureen Kenny-Massari, Viv Jones Stretten, Beth Mather Graves, Kathy Carr Phyfer, Vicky Steiger Olin

Row 3 – Shawn Lacy, Margy Blaney Davidson, Nan Lester Maguire, Betsy Kellogg Hamilton, Darbie Lister Maccubbin, Laurie Kilpatrick, Ellen McNeary Briggs, Gay Reese

Row 4 – Anne DeFuria, Cindy Conston Savett, Kathryn Uhler Shutler, Mugsy McGowan, Anne Turner Keifer, Anne Grubb Vilece, Helen Haskell MacCallum, Meg Campbell, Mary B. Robinson

## Class of 1971

It is in honor of the Class of 1971 that the Awards Committee has created the Mandala Award, which recognizes a class for outstanding cohesiveness over the years and an unwavering class spirit.



This inaugural award was presented to the Class of 1971, whose yearbook – The Mandala – is a fitting symbol of the unity among these alumnae.

"The Mandala, signifying the connectedness of life, has brought the Class of 1971 full circle," said Sally M. Powell, head of school. "These women returned to Baldwin – the magical place where they became a collective group – as inspirations and role models for other classes that are ready to step out and make their mark on the world," she continued.

The Class of 1971 shows support and care for each other, an awareness of what their time at Baldwin meant to them, and how it shaped their future, both as individuals and as a whole. One letter to Baldwin from a 1971 alumna expressed it quite eloquently, "We loved Baldwin in 1971. We appreciate it even more now. We have discovered that the deep truths we learned at Baldwin are real: to love well, to serve others, to work hard, faithfully, honorably, uncomplainingly, over the long haul, to be honest, to be truthful, to be courageous, to excel individually and together. And we've learned to laugh."

Andrea Hammerschmidt Felkins '71, who accepted the Mandala Award on behalf of her classmates, echoed these sentiments. "If you want to keep your class spirit alive, *you have to nurture it*. These women sitting around you are a gift. Make it a priority to stay connected. Don't wonder who is coming to a reunion – ask people to come. Put your time and effort into the things that you value. Please believe that these people sitting around you are people worth keeping in your life."