

# A Brief History

Many people ask, "What is 'AVA'?" So perhaps this will explain. It all began in 1994, as the dream of Jeanne Bock (an artist, teacher, and life-long promoter of fine art) and J.P. Puette (a strong supporter of art, dedicated to championing worthy artistic endeavors). Their vision was to create an umbrella organization which would serve the art clubs in Northern California and hold an annual juried fine art show at the Triton Museum of Art, where all the member clubs could exhibit their artists' work. It was called the Visual Artists Associations Summit at the Triton (or VAAST for short), and the Triton Museum of Art agreed to having the annual show on their grounds, supporting it as much as was possible. It was not a Triton program, nor has it ever received funding from the Museum, but the Triton helped and cooperated in many ways from the beginning, in addition to providing the site for the show.

Jeanne Bock began her tireless efforts to make VAAST a reality, and many clubs expressed an interest. The first VAAST Show was a success, and that has continued to the present. However, the number of participating clubs declined each year because of distance; many offer their members all they need; and communication was difficult, due to the diverse nature of the clubs. Nevertheless, with Jeanne's hard work, J.P.'s dependable support, and George Rivera's (Triton Director) help, the show improved each year, and each built on the past ones. In 1998, when Jeanne's health began to fail, she asked Marian Gault to take over the leadership and try to keep her dream alive, which she has done. Jeanne's death, not long afterward, was a loss to the art community, and to keep her memory alive the Jeanne Bock "Spirit of Art" Award was established by J.P. Puette, to be presented at each Festival to those who have made outstanding service to art in our community.

Because no one seemed to (be able to) remember what VAAST stood for, the organization's name was changed to Alliance of Visual Artists (AVA); the show became "AVArtFest," and it has remained a high-quality, juried fine-art show, with ribbons and monetary prizes awarded by well-known jurors.

In 2001, membership requirements were abolished, and since then entry into the Festival has been open to all Bay Area individual artists as well as to art clubs whose member artists wish to participate as a group. All work is juried into the show. Several years ago, AVA qualified for 501(c)(3) status and functions now as a non-profit organization, with non-paid volunteer staff.

In 2009, the Festival was moved to Pioneer Park in Mountain View to increase visibility, and became a partner of the Community School of Music and Arts, also located in Mountain View.

AVArtFest continues to be a unique, first-class, juried, fine art show which spotlights aspiring, emerging, and established local artists and fills an important need in the Bay Area community.