

**PATRICIA LASPINO HAS BEEN NOMINATED TO THE 2012  
SMITHSONIAN'S ARTIST RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

Thomas Mirenda, Orchid Collection Specialist at the Smithsonian Institution's Natural History Museum, nominated artist, Patricia Laspino for the 2012 Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship Program (SARF). The program offers visual artists the opportunity to spend two to three months working with Smithsonian experts and collections in one or more of the Smithsonian Institution's 19 museums, galleries, and research centers. Nominations for the program were solicited from Smithsonian art curators and research staff, international art curators and scholars, and the program offers a dynamic research environment for artists to investigate the objects, discoveries, and historical events that inspire creative work.

Over the past thirty years of Patricia Laspino's career as a professional artist, she has been interested in the natural world and the human response to its beauty, diversity and as well as the power it has to influence. Through SARF, the artist intends to explore evolutionary connections in the perception of beauty from two distinct perspectives: the Science of nature and the history of Art.

Laspino will study the attraction of pollinators to the biologically diverse orchid flower by working with key staff members and specimens in various facilities within the Museum of Natural History/Department of Botany. Through this research, she aims to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of science in the human perception of beauty. Some of the most fascinating orchid survival strategies which the artist intends to study are bio-mimicry and floral advertisement via shape, color and symmetry. She will explore the evolutionary cause and effect relationships in terms of natural selection and the orchid's relationship to beauty.

The artist envisions the work she accomplishes at the Smithsonian will not only provide an exciting new viewpoint, but also directly and physically affect the content of her paintings. Laspino's intention is to create a new naturalistic vocabulary consisting of nature's reoccurring shapes, designs, textures and colors. The enhanced artistic process specifically gained from the SARF program will add yet another layer of communication within her paintings; that "in science there is art and in art, there is science".

Laspino will be working and consulting with senior curator, Virginia Mecklenburg, at the Smithsonian's American Art Museum in investigating beauty within the historical context of other American painters (late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century) whose works appear to be influenced by the floral or orchid.

Patricia plans to integrate these new insights, along with her artistic and intellectual response, and incorporate these into a body of floral work for exhibition. The body of work will include transformative paintings, collateral educational materials, exhibition catalogs, books, lesson plans for teachers where applicable, as well as the development of thought provoking artist lectures. These will all be designed to provide a fresh perspective on finding new connections between humans, our perception of beauty and the natural world.

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