

# MujerARTES



*a testimonial by Dolores Zapata Murff  
(a.k.a. Dee)*

About eighteen months ago, I read an article in the *Express News* about an art exhibit at the Esperanza, which was featuring artwork created by women, Latina women. I had never heard of the Esperanza Peace and Justice center but I wanted to learn more about

this organization that promoted women artists. I learned about their mission and I started volunteering with the mail out for *La Voz*. One might say I was at the right place and the right time. I had a desire to one-day exhibit my artwork. At that time I worked with sugar and I also painted. One day Jennifer Simmons told me about a program the Esperanza had called MujerARTES. Jennifer told me that the Esperanza was looking for women interested in learning how to work with clay. She told me that the classes were free and so were the supplies. The



idea is to form a co-operative where women of low income can come in and learn a marketable skill. It's been a year since I joined MujerARTES and under the instruction of Veronica Castillo, an international folk artist, I have learned a skill I never imagined would be so much fun. I learned how to make the most beautiful artwork in my life. I have become familiar with *El Arbol De Vida*, Tree of Life. Not only did I build one, but I also learned the history behind that type of work. I also learned about *El Dia de Los Muertos*, the day of the dead. Although I was somewhat reluctant to paint satirical skeletons on platters I had made

by hand, I soon learned how popular this type of art has become. After a while ideas began springing up. I was having so much fun I invited my sister to come and join us. She agreed to try it



for a week, she's been there just under a year. I met other women in the group and though we might be different in lifestyles, we have learned that as Latina women we are not that



different after all. We share a common goal, to learn a skill, to be able to market that skill. Its like learning to run a small business. There is a market for our type of work. We hand craft all our designs. We do not use manufactured molds. Our work is as unique as each one of us. We work as a group and help each

other out. The greatest reward for me was to exhibit and sell my work at our own open house and at the Hecho a Mano show at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center. What an exciting year it has been for me, in addition to learning all that I have, I also met a woman from Cuba who was here to study our cooperative and share

her ideas and stories about the women's movement in Cuba. As if that isn't enough excitement, I got to personally meet with the mayor and discuss our program and also show him some of our work. I became active in trying to save the funding for the Esperanza. Our group was featured in the *Express-News* under

the best bets for exhibits. MujerARTES was featured on Univision in their program *Lo Mejor de lo Nuestro*. I can honestly tell you it has been a great year. In spite of the defunding, we have survived and have adopted the "Yes, we can" attitude. The time has come for some our women to move

on and although we will miss them, this gives other women the opportunity to joins us and learn what we have learned. If you would like to be a part of our group, please don't hesitate to call the Esperanza. I would like to take this opportunity to



thank Graciela Sánchez for supporting Las Mujeres at MujerARTES. I know with the defunding that some cuts had to be made. But the article I read one year and half ago was not wrong, the Esperanza does indeed support and promote Women Artists. ☀



**Phillip Avila**

March 6 thru April 6, 1998

Reception for the artist

Friday March 6, 7 to 11pm

**SALA DIAZ**

517 Stieren, San Antonio, Texas 78210

(1100 E. of S. St. Mary's)

Tel. 210-610-7014