

JAMES R. BUTLER

THE “WOW” FACTOR

CELEBRATING
INNOVATION IN ART

I VIVIDLY REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I SAW Nathan Bennett’s artwork in a gallery. I walked toward the smallish landscape thinking how pleasantly eerie it was, with its muted colors and starkly simple composition. Then, as I got closer, I realized that much of its ethereal beauty came from its shimmering surface, and that it wasn’t a traditional oil-on-canvas painting at all; the artist had created it using the same patinas that are applied to the surfaces of cast bronze sculptures to give them their coloration. You can read more about Bennett’s unusual creative process on page 94 as part of our special feature, “The Innovators.”

We created this feature to pay tribute to everyone in the art world—artist, gallery owner, curator, organizer—who’s taking creativity to a high level by working with new materials, new techniques, and new ideas. Of course, creativity is the focus of *every* issue of *Southwest Art*, but this month we turn the spotlight on those imaginative souls who have developed especially unusual or unique approaches, who truly are thinking outside the box. Many times the results of their efforts elicited a collective “Wow!” from our editorial staff, or an incredulous “That’s made of paper?” (or wood, or glass). We hope you’ll be as astonished and impressed as we are by the sheer inventiveness on display in these pages.

We also hope you’ll be impressed when *Southwest Art* introduces some exciting innovations of our own in the upcoming months. We’ll have a beautiful new look in our February issue, with more large images of art, plus a more informative calendar of events and compelling new feature stories. We’re also bringing you plenty of new features on our website, www.southwestart.com, where you’ll soon be able to search for artists and galleries across the West, browse through past issues of the magazine, view video reports from important art events, and sign up to receive special newsletters from the editors. It’s all part of our mission to make *Southwest Art* your authoritative source for the best art in the West.

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RAIN DANCER BY TAMMY GARCIA (SEE PAGE 100).

