

## CULTURE

# Artistic Visions

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RENATA GOLDEN / TEXT BY MARK ALAN BARRACK

**he Grand Dame** of American dance, Martha Graham, once said that there is "something in the atmosphere, an *energy*" in the Southwest that vitalizes the creative spirit. One can find proof of her observation almost anywhere in Arizona. From Tucson to Sedona, from Winslow to Apache Junction, where the painters and sculptors of strangeness and beauty are at work expanding the universe of human expression and perception, Arizona's artistic forces are alive and thriving.

You can talk politics and economics and business. But you can't gain a coherent view of the critical elements shaping life anywhere without examining the arena of those who contribute to progress from outside utilitarian concerns of the work-a-day world.

Thus, herein a tribute to a small cross section of visionaries and creators who are enlivening our environment and earning the Southwest prominence as a wellspring of fresh contemporary art.

**D**onald Locke, born in Guyana, educated in Scotland and England, came to Arizona State University through a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1979 as an artist-in-residence to fashion mixed-media sculptures, and stayed to make Phoenix his home. The bronze sculptures have since evolved into abstract sensual human and animal shapes, for which he has developed an innovative process for coloring the metal surfaces of his works.

"I call the shapes 'human concretions' — compacted and abstracted into a solid form that is still human. My sculptures are absolutely living; they depend on that inner blood, that vitality," elucidates Locke. "I have also discovered the secret of colored bronzes: greens and turquoises and reds specially painted and heated on the metal. I want to marry painting and sculpture in a traditional way as the ancients did."

