

## **Silvia Fernández-Stein**

Silvia Fernández-Stein was born in Santiago, Chile.

In 1962 Silvia was one of thirty students to receive a scholarship to study art at the Experimental School of Art in Santiago.

In 1970 she began formal art studies at the School of Fine Arts, University of Chile. She participated in the student movement, "Art for Everyone" which produced murals and art exhibitions for neighborhood groups and labor unions. Ms. Fernández-Stein specialized in public ornamentation because she believed that public art should portray the life of the common people and not solely the achievements of the elite.

In 1976, Ms. Fernández-Stein was exiled from Chile to the USA by the military government because of her work with the Catholic Church's human rights agency, "Vicaría de la Solidaridad".

In 1978, in the United States, Ms. Fernández-Stein, designed with community participation, and displayed murals as part of a community project in New Brunswick, New Jersey. She studied weaving at Middlesex County College, New Jersey.

In 1979, she moved to Stamford and volunteered as an art teacher and costume designer at the Children's Creative Workshop. She continued her art education, studying sculpture with Steffi Friedman in Westport and drawing at SUNY.

She participated in the "Pink Tent" Art Festival of Stamford as a demonstrator, and she coordinated the Hispanic Art Exposition at the Ferguson Library during Spanish week.

Ms. Fernández-Stein taught clay sculpture to handicapped persons, in 1984-85, at the Clay Place, in Norwalk.

She has been a volunteer in the Stamford school system from 1979, helping at the Media Center and as a class helper in Julia Stark, Newfield, Hart, Toquam, Turn

Of River and Stamford High School. She also taught dance and Native American culture as well as Latin American culture in Sacred Heart Academy, Turn of River, Dolan, Hart, Julia Stark, Northeast, Stamford High School, and West Hill High School.

From 1990 to 1995, and starting again in 1997, she was director and choreographer of a dancing group, Ballet Folklorico Arcoiris. It provided recreation and education in Latin American culture. The group has danced at different fairs, churches, schools, and universities. She has also helped the Haitian dance group PARADISE.

In 1991-92, she worked at the Stamford Community Art Council directing and producing two plays and teaching sculpture, drawing, painting and dance classes. Presently she is helping at Stamford High School with Spanish students to improve their academic skills. In addition she has developed programs to counsel students regarding higher education and employment opportunities after high school and extended this program to work directly with the students' parents.

She was a member of the Mayor's Multicultural Council, where she helped to put together the Stamford: Many Faces Many Voices in 1992 at the Rich Forum as well as an Art exhibition at the Mayor's office.

She has worked at the Jewish Arts Alive organization teaching arts and crafts, and designing costumes.

She is involved with the American Red Cross and has a group of Latino youth whom she motivated to become instructors of First Aid, CPR, and HIV/AIDS.

In June 1995 she received the "Hispanic Community Awards of Fairfield County" given by "Our Lady Of Montserrat Church." In 1998, Ms. Fernandez-Stein received the Stamford Public Schools Multi-Cultural Council Award. She also received an award in 1998, from Liberation Programs for her community work.

Since 1996, she has produced a TV program on Canal 27 Public Access in Spanish "Se Ve La T.V." to promote education and social services available in Stamford.

Since fall 1998, she has been the Stamford Coordinator for STAMFORD URBAN ARTISTS INITIATIVE a program for minority, emerging and ethnic artists sponsored by the Connecticut Commission on the Arts and The Institute for Community Research.

In July 1999 she opened a Community Theater named STAMFORD URBAN ARTS FESTIVAL, sponsored by the Stamford Cultural Development Corporation, at 20 Forest St Stamford in Unitarian Universalist Society where she did a Summer program with 8 Shows during the month of July and August, for the fall, winter and Spring the shows are every second and last Saturday of the month.

She has participated in many art exhibitions:  
University of Chile, Santiago, Chile; Unitarian Society, Stamford one person show;  
Stamford Art Festival (group show); Ferguson Library - Hispanic" week; Stamford Art Assoc. (Juried exhibit); Westport Nature Center (group show); Housatonic College show; Aetna Gallery in Hartford; Stamford Community Art Council; art exhibit at University of Connecticut, Storrs, Stamford Mayor Art Gallery;

**Education:**

- 1962-63 Experimental School of Art, Santiago, Chile
- 1970-75 University of Chile, Santiago Chile (School of Fine Arts)
- 1978 Middlesex County College, New Jersey (Weaving)
- 1985 SUNY University, Purchase, N.Y. (Drawing)
- 1985-87 Steffi Friedman Studio, Westport, CT. (Sculpture)

**Award:**

- 1995, "Hispanic Community Award of Fairfield County"
- 1998 She was recognized with the Humanitarian Award from the Diversity Office of the Stamford Board of Education.
- 1998 State of Connecticut Official Citation in recognition for her community work.
- 2000 United States Census 2000 "Outstanding Service Award"
- 2001 Success by 6 "Champion of Children Award"
- 2002 Stamford Latino Chamber of Commerce Award
- 2003 The Institute for Community Research "Living Space Award"

Married to Robert M. Stein Jr., Mother of three children; Silvia Stein, 27, a graduate of the University of Hartford, Guido Stein, 23, graduate at Clark University, and David, 19, student at Franklin College in Switzerland. In addition Ms. Fernández-Stein is a writer and poet.

**Born in New York, 1971  
Studied at Pratt Institute, NY  
Sacred Heart University, CT  
Connecticut Institute of Art, CT  
Fortman Studios, Florence, Italy  
Currently living in Connecticut**

Born in New York, he comes from a family with artistic talents on both sides. This artist continues to hold the creativity from his father of Montevideo, Uruguay and his mother of Santiago, Chile and the culture of his grandparents. He attended public schools, which in the sixth grade was when his art skills started to be seen. Benitez was taken away from the city by his parents for a better future in Connecticut. But Benitez managed to travel to Queens and Brooklyn New York occasionally to visit family and friends and also to be introduced to "Street Art" or better known as "Graffiti" at the age of fourteen. Benitez saw this contemporary form of art as an interpretation created by young artists like him self. The artist feels graffiti has taken on a negative view, whereas society associates the aspect with violence and vandalism. To Benitez, "Our ancestors drew on rocks and pyramids!" and believes that it is just another means of expressions...Freedom...Talent...Imagination.

With the encouragement of his peers and other influential figures, Benitez focused his interest in fine arts. He realized it was time to engage circumstance with his unusual ability in order to prepare him for the future. Benitez has received much deserved recognition for his work. Benitez talents are sought after by many corporations including a selected student art show at the Whitney Museum in Stamford, CT sponsored by Champion International at the age of 18. General Electric/GE, Communico, Phillip Morris, Pitney Bowes, Meta Group Inc., General Motors/GMC, Douwe Egberts, Goldman Sachs, Heineken and private contributors are companies that have interest in Benitez's work. After studying Art & Design at Sacred Heart University, Benitez never finished and took a risk in the arts and flew to Florence, Italy to study Fine Arts. After returning from Italy his imagination and style grew. His style was recognized and soon invited to many group shows throughout New York and Connecticut. In 1993, Benitez completed his studies at the Connecticut Institute of Art and has had his artwork displayed in numerous shows over the years. In 1996 he had a showing at the New York Underground Film Festival in Manhattan and then led to a one-person show in the basement of The Legendary CBGB's club in New York.

The core of Benitez's work is the conjunction between art and dance of the African Diaspora. The art, singing, drums, dances and costumes of "Candombe" are the everyday expressions of pleasure and joy in Afro Uruguayan people. Benitez links his Afro Uruguayan culture back to Africa and expresses the traditional forms that have survived throughout the centuries as well as what in many cases are the last examples of a life soon to be taken away by modernization. Benitez adds through his unique surreal style, the usage of colors and abstract figures with strong emotion. His work is sure to evoke interesting conversation on life and human relationships in effort to bring a deep communion between man and universe.

*"The continuum of generations! Spiritual heritage is everlasting. My work represents my bloodline, experiences and the continuity of generations and the spirituality that comes from reaching into my past and connecting it to my identity and my future through my Afro-Uruguayan roots."*

*Jorge Benitez Del Sur*

#### Exhibitions

- 1997 Group Show-Post 53 Space, Darien, CT  
 One Person Show- Communico Co., Westport, CT  
 One Person Show-Dock Street Gallery, Stamford, CT  
 Solo Exhibition- CBGB's Gallery Space, Manhattan, NY  
 Group Show-Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY
- 1998 Group Exhibition-Stamford Government Center, Stamford, CT
- 1999 One Person Show-Al Miller Gallery Space, Manhattan, NY  
 Group Exhibition-Governor's Office/State Capital Building, Hartford, CT  
 Solo Exhibition-Rich Forum, Stamford, CT  
 Group Exhibition-General Electric/GE Capital, Stamford, CT  
 Group Show-Stamford Museum & Nature Center, Stamford, CT  
 One Person Show-City Center, Miami, FL
- 2000 Solo Exhibition-GE Capital Black History Month, Stamford, CT  
 Group Show-Stamford Museum & Nature Center, Stamford, CT  
 Group Show-Stamford Government Center, Stamford, CT  
 Solo Show-Julliard School/Lincoln Center & Phillip Morris, NY, NY  
 Solo Show-University of West Florida/Art Center, Pensicola, FL  
 Commission Work-Stamford Branch/Whitney Museum, Stamford, CT  
 Group Show-Afro-Latin Festival, Waterbury, CT
- 2001 Group Show-Richter Art Association, Danbury, CT  
 Commission Work- Music & Arts Center for Humanities, Bridgeport, CT  
 Commission Mural- City Project of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT  
 Group Show- University of Connecticut, Stamford, CT  
 Group Show- Pitney Bowes Corp. Headquarters, Stamford, CT  
 Group Show-Charter Oak Museum, Hartford, CT  
 Group Show- Bradley Int'l Airport, Windsor Locks, CT
- 2002 Group Show-Institute for Community Research Gallery Space, Hartford, CT  
 Group Show-Jacob's Pillow Art Center-"A Tribute to Katherine Dunham",  
 Berkshire, MASS.
- 2003 Solo Show-Corporate Installation for Meta Group Inc. Stamford, CT.  
 Group Show-Latin & Caribbean Art Exhibit at South Street Seaport, General  
 Motors/ GMC, Goldman Sachs & Co. NY, NY  
 Group Show-Latin & Caribbean Art Exhibit at Craftworks Gallery/General  
 Motors/ GMC, Martha's Vineyard, MA.  
 Group Show-Latin & Caribbean Art Exhibit -Heineken/USA, East Hampton,  
 NY