

# Obits turned to art

*Agnes Martin's passing resulted in works of minimal art for artist Karen Schiff*

Staff report

"I began tracing Agnes Martin's obituaries because I missed her," Karen Schiff said. That effort, which began when Schiff learned of the world-renowned artist and Taos resident's death at the age of 92 on Dec. 16, 2004, has come to fruition as a series of artworks created from the published articles that followed.

Schiff plans to give a slide lecture and discussion Thursday (March 22), 7 p.m., at the Harwood Museum of Art, where a celebration is planned in commemoration of Martin's birth that continues through Friday (March 23).

"Though I never met her, I have considered her my main artistic inspiration for over a decade," Schiff said in an artist statement. "When she died ... I saved her obituary from *The Boston Globe* to read during 'quality time,' so that the news of her passing would not get overwhelmed by the maelstrom of daily information."

She said when she sat down to read the article, she found herself staring at the page. "I was thinking about her work and life, and lamenting the fact that I had never written her a letter. Then I got distracted by the geometries of the article's columns, arranged with the image to make a legible whole ... the overall composition gave me a feeling of richly populated spaciousness that reminded me of her work. Thus the project was born: It was simply a tribute begging to be made."

In addition to Schiff's presentation, the Harwood is planning to screen two films made about Martin during her life Friday at 2 p.m. Admission is free.

Mary Lance's film "Agnes Martin: With My Back to The World" is a groundbreaking documentary on the internationally renowned painter. Shot over a period of four years, from 1998 through 2002, the 57-minute film includes



Artist Karen Schiff began to gather obituaries about Agnes Martin in 2005.

interviews with Martin, which are intercut with shots of the artist at work in her Taos studio, as well as photographs, archival footage and images of her work during the past five decades.

In addition to Lance's award-

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## FYI

### Schiff lecture

- **When:** Thursday, March 22, 7 p.m.
- **Where:** Harwood Museum, 238 Ledoux St.
- **Information:** (505) 758-9826

### Film screenings

- **When:** Friday, March 23, beginning at 2 p.m.
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# Obits

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winning film, the Harwood will also be presenting for the first time to the public, Anne Wilson's film chronicling Martin's early years in New York City. Wilson, also an artist, was a close friend of Martin from the late 1950s up until her death.

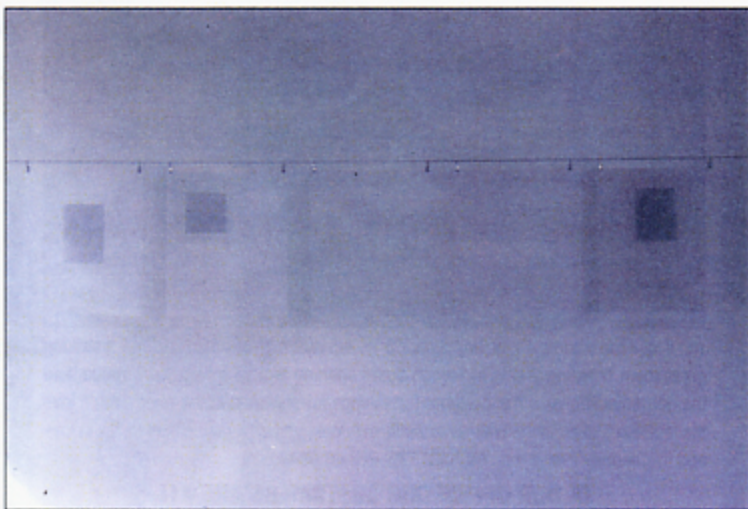
The Harwood Museum of Art exhibits seven paintings by Martin in a permanent gallery devoted to this work. These paintings from 1992-93 were the first works the artist created upon returning to Taos. The museum also owns a rare 1950s biomorphically abstract work by Martin which is currently on view. Martin had a long history with the Taos community as well as the Harwood, it is thus fitting that the museum screens this groundbreaking film for

the community in honor of the artist's March 23 birthday.

The Harwood Museum of Art is located at 238 Ledoux St. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., Sundays noon to 5 p.m. Admission is \$7, free to New Mexico residents on Sundays. Call (505) 758-9826 or for a complete listing of exhibitions and programs or visit online at [www.harwoodmuseum.org](http://www.harwoodmuseum.org).



The Agnes Martin obits, collected from publications all over the world.



The piece made from the obituary published in *Tempo* was the only one that ran over five pages.

Courtesy photo