

Ruth Carter Stevenson (1923–2013)

The Amon Carter Museum of American Art's board of trustees and staff mourn the passing of their longtime president of the board, Ruth Carter Stevenson. The daughter of the museum's namesake, Amon G. Carter Sr. (1879–1955), Stevenson was solely responsible for seeing that her father's wish to establish a museum for the city of Fort Worth was realized. Under her leadership, the Amon Carter Museum of American Art opened to the public in January 1961.

Ruth Carter Stevenson was born in Fort Worth, where she attended North Hi-Mount Elementary School, Stripling Middle School, and Arlington Heights High School. At age fifteen she enrolled at the Madeira School in McLean, Virginia, taking her first art history course, which included trips to the landmark museums and galleries of Washington, DC. Upon graduation from Madeira, Stevenson attended Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, graduating in 1945. Her exposure to art expanded still more during her years at Sarah Lawrence, when she traveled frequently to art destinations in New York City.

Stevenson returned home to Fort Worth in 1949, and at the age of twenty-six she was elected to the board of the Fort Worth Art Association. During her first year in this capacity, she was instrumental in organizing the first major American art exhibition in Fort Worth, which included works by Winslow Homer. The following year, she spearheaded an art education program for every fifth-grader in Fort Worth through her service in the Junior League. This activity would telecast her lifelong commitment to providing arts education for students. In the decades following the opening of the Amon Carter, she wholeheartedly supported and encouraged the educational program at the museum, and today more than 20,000 school students each year tour the Amon Carter's galleries.

In 1960, Stevenson began a twenty-three-year association with the Fort Worth City Art Commission; many of these years she served as chairman. She also served on the board of Fort Worth's Trinity Valley School, and in 1963 she founded the Arts Council of Fort Worth and Tarrant County. That same year, she was appointed by then Governor John Connally to the board of regents of the University of Texas, becoming only the second woman to serve in that capacity. In addition to pressing for the preservation of the historic campus architecture, Stevenson played a key role in the full desegregation of the University of Texas school system. (In 1992, the university established the Ruth Carter Stevenson Chair of Architecture.)

Stevenson's involvement with the arts reached far beyond the state of Texas. She served on the Visiting Committee of the Fogg Museum at Harvard; joined the boards of the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Trust for Historic Places, and the American Federation of

Arts; and became the first woman appointed to the board of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. In 1987, she was invited to the Supreme Court building in Washington as an honored guest at Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's event for women who had made a difference in American society.

Later in life, Stevenson would again turn her focus fully onto the city of her birth and the museum she founded on a high point in Fort Worth's esteemed Cultural District, a hub of international art centers she helped to establish. She assumed the presidency of the Amon G. Carter Foundation, renowned for its charitable giving, after the passing of her brother, Amon G. Carter Jr. (1919–1982). She served on the Amon Carter Museum of American Art's board for more than fifty years, and in her last decade in that role she oversaw a massive expansion of the structure. The new building increased the museum's gallery spaces fourfold and resulted in a state-of-the-art conservation facility and both cold- and cool-storage vaults for the museum's expansive photography holdings.

Stevenson was active in many civic, philanthropic, and botanical pursuits until the end of her life. During the museum's 50th Anniversary year, the museum acquired a rare painting by Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) in honor of her decades of leadership and guidance. In April of that year, she was honored at a gala on the museum's plaza, which was attended by some 400 guests from around the country. On that occasion, Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery and a longtime friend of Stevenson, made remarks in her honor. "Over its history, the Amon Carter has put together one of the great collections of American art. It is a great, great place Ruth has created for Fort Worth and the nation."

The Amon Carter Museum of American Art exists today because of Ruth Carter Stevenson. Like her father, she leaves behind a magnanimous legacy, one that will tangibly continue to bring joy and fulfillment to many future generations.