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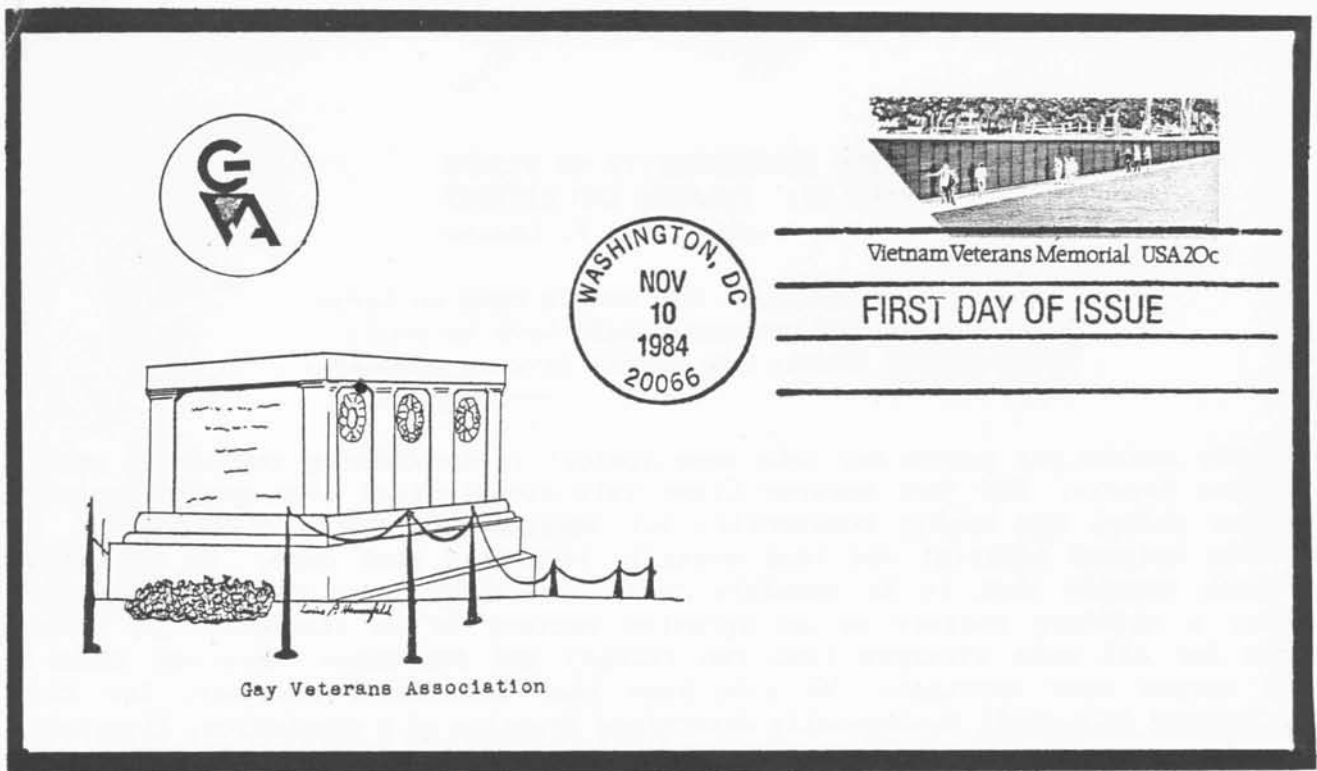
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Gay Veterans Association

The VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL stamp on this F.D.C. was issued on November 10, 1984, by the U.S. Postal service, at Washington, D.C.

This cachet was designed by Gay Veterans Association member Paul Hennefeld. It is in memory of our gay brothers and sisters who died for their country and also in honor of all gay veterans. The G.V.A. logo celebrates the founding of the Gay Veterans Association. The Unknown Soldiers' grave was drawn by Paul when he was a patient at the Veterans Hospital in Temple, Texas. It was first used on the cover of the hospital's magazine Hypo in November 1974.

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GREEK HOMOSEXUALITY ON STAMPS
PART II: CULTURE AND HISTORY
—by Brian F. Lanter

*To be really medieval, one should have no body.
To be really modern, one should have no soul.
To be really Greek, one should have no clothes.¹*
—Oscar Wilde

Every modern gay person may take some comfort in considering the sexual ethics of ancient Greece. Not just because Greek male society (and even female society, in a few cases) was highly homoerotic, but because the entire civilization, as the Wilde epigram implies, was less sexually repressed than ours. We know from the Greek example that it is possible to successfully run a crowded commercial society, a military society or an agrarian society in an atmosphere of sexual freedom for all male citizens (who ran things) and for those women who chose a sexual career over marriage. We also know that homosexual behavior, far from being limited to a small biologically determined fraction of a population, flourishes in freedom or as a state institution, indicating that a greater number of humans than current statistics show to be actively homosexual are, in fact, capable of homosexual response.

In our homophobic modern world, we see few historical (i.e. non-mythological) homosexual themes purposefully represented on stamps. In collecting our topic, we learn and call attention to the suppressed homosexual content of history and we can only do the same even for the history of the world's most homoerotic society. We have written evidence that very many ancient Greek personalities, some of whom (or whose works) are represented on stamps, engaged in homosexual behavior or celebrated it in their works. See the appendix to this article for a list of the most famous. With apologies to women readers, we just don't know much about the sexual practices of Greek women. Male writers occasionally referred to lesbianism in some regions with no apparent disapproval.

The oldest literary portrayal of Greek male-male love is in the works of Homer, the earliest surviving Greek literature, composed or compiled about 750-650 B.C. (all dates given are B.C. unless noted), concerning events at the end of the 13th century. Greeks from at least the 7th century on revered a Bronze Age Homeric hero (Achilleus) whose most salient personality traits were pride and a passionate primary emotional relationship with another young man,² which classical age Greeks frequently interpreted as sexual.³ One cannot necessarily deduce poets' sexuality from their poems, but one can deduce the sexuality of at least significant portions of successful poets' audiences or patrons. Homer, whose works Greeks used to educate their children, gave male-male love credit for motivating noble behavior of superior humans equal to that which he gave heterosexual and familial love. This equality seems to have prevailed in literature and culture until well into the Christian era under Roman rule.

Poets. Although we will never know the relative proportions in successful Greek poetry of homosexual, heterosexual and nonsexual themes, Greek poetry does abound, from its Homeric beginning past the fall of the Roman Empire, with enthusiastic homoeroticism.

W. Germany 1226



Sophie Schröder
as Sappho

Greece 1188



The island of Lesbos

Greece 934



Pindar

Greece 654



Andromeda by
Euripides

Sappho of Lesbos, one of the most highly regarded lyric poets in ancient times, gave the name to lesbianism and apparently represents a short-lived but glorious phenomenon of a female homosexual cultural circle.

*Some say a host of cavalry, others of infantry, and others of ships, is the most beautiful thing on the black earth, but I say it is whatsoever a person loves. . . [Helen of Troy] has reminded me now of Anaktoria who is not here; I would rather see her lovely walk and the bright sparkle of her face than the Lydians' chariots and armed infantry.*⁴ --Sappho

Pindar is most famous for choral odes (songs) in praise of Olympic victors and other heroic men. His poetry shows a whole-hearted enthusiasm for male beauty. He is said to have died in the arms of his beloved youth, Theoxenos.⁵

*We should, my heart, gather the flowers of love at the moment that fits our years, but if anyone sees the flashes that shoot from the eyes of Theoxenos and is not rolled on a wave of desire, of adamant or of iron has he been forged in his black heart. . . But I, because of the goddess, am gnawed by the heat and melt like the wax of holy bees, whenever I look upon the youth and fresh limbs of boys.*⁶ --Pindar

Athenian plays, which dominated all Greek theater, sometimes featured homosexual affairs.⁷ Several of the greatest tragic poets seem to have been predominantly homosexual: Aeschylus, Sophokles and Agathon (whom Aristophanes lampooned for effeminacy) among them. **Euripides**, the only playwright represented on a stamp, wrote a lost play about the origin of homosexuality, Chrysippos, possibly inspired by his love for Agathon.⁸ He apparently had more difficulties with his heterosexual love life⁹ than with boys.¹⁰

*O lads! what a love-charm you are to the heart of a man.*¹¹ --Euripides

Art. The homoeroticism of Greek culture is evident from surviving sculpture, vases and mosaics. Greeks in general admired human beauty of both sexes and celebrated the naked body as no other culture in history. From literature we know that the beauty of youths often had an explicitly sexual appeal to many Greek males; the statues of beautiful youths must also have appealed to this sexual aesthetic appreciation. Male nudity constantly appears in social and religious contexts. Most of the Greek nudes (male or female) on stamps are from the contexts most acceptable to moderns, mythology and athletics.

Greek sculpture of the classical period characteristically celebrated the young, athletic male. In our time, we are beginning again to openly idolize physical beauty (male and female) achieved with great effort, in the form of athletic movie and TV stars, models and body builders.

Greece 1057



Athlete crowning himself

Greece (recent)



Dionysos from Parthenon frieze

Greece (recent)



Lapith from Parthenon frieze

Italy 803



Myron's discus thrower

Of course, Greek males' appreciation of male beauty was often romantic as well as aesthetic. Beautiful youths were not solely sexual objects but objects of the whole range of love feelings:

Greece 1111

Charioteer of Delphi



*O lad, chastely looking about, I seek after you, but you are not aware, you do not know that you hold the reins of my soul.*¹² --Anakreon

Greece 524

Youth of Marathon



*O most beautiful and most desirable of all lads, stand and listen to a few verses of mine.*¹³
--Theognis

Mali C130

Zeus at Olympia



*Pantarkes is beautiful.*¹⁴
--Pheidias

The only definitely homosexual sculptor whose work is identifiably illustrated on stamps is **Pheidias**, one of the greatest classical artists. He oversaw the sculptural decoration of the Parthenon in Athens (see illustrations at top). He created the image of Athena for the Parthenon and the great image of Zeus for the temple at Olympia. On the finger of that image he is said to have carved the words "Pantarkes is beautiful" (a common form of epigram for vases), referring to his lover Pantarkes, an Olympic victor in boys' wrestling.¹⁵

The Greeks also used vase painting (actually painting on all manner of ceramic vessels) and mosaics as media for representational art. Vases were painted to order and for commercial sale. Surviving vases show a great number of explicitly sexual scenes, both homosexual and heterosexual (rarely lesbian). As with poetry, we can never know what proportion of sexual illustrations on vases or in mosaics reflected what tastes, and of course no sexual illustrations appear on stamps. However, vase paintings and mosaics on stamps do further illustrate the Greek enthusiasm for beautiful naked bodies.

Surinam (recent)



Boy massaging athlete

Greece 982



Herakles wrestling Antaios

Greece (recent)



Athletes relaxing

Greece 969



Hunter from mosaic floor at Pella in Macedon

Philosophers. Many generations of gay people have found support and inspiration in the lives and works of Greek philosophers, especially Sokrates, Plato and Aristotle, the three most influential.

Dominica 243



David's "Death of Sokrates." Sokrates is seated in center.

Greece 1258



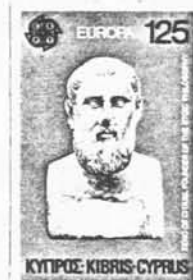
Rafael's "School of Athens." Plato is on the left.

Cyprus 505



Bust of Aristotle

Cyprus 534



Bust of Zeno of Kition

Sokrates, though married, was strongly devoted to male beauty. Reputed to be very ugly, he nonetheless attracted to himself many of the most attractive young men of Athens, several of whom turned out also to be the most capable. In later life, at least, Sokrates seems to have forsworn sexual intercourse with males in favor of concentrating on the moral strength afforded by sublimation of desire, but he was nonetheless devoted to the beauty and the love of youths¹⁶ and did not condemn people for having homosexual intercourse:

. . . somewhere in their drunkenness or some other carelessness, their two undisciplined beasts under the yoke, taking their souls unwatched, leading them together into that which is deemed happy among the many, will sieze them and accomplish it for themselves . . . the madness of love brings them no small prize; it is not the rule for those having already begun the heavenly journey to still go in the darkness . . . but rather, leading a shining life, to be happy travelling with each other . . .¹⁷ --Sokrates (Plato)

Sokrates himself wrote nothing. It was Plato who put the words above in Sokrates' mouth, but we do have plenty of non-Platonic corroboration of Sokrates' homosexuality. As for Plato, besides his creation or recording of an ethical system based on sublimation of homosexual desire, we have his own voice in poems to evidence his homosexuality:

*Kissing Agathon, I had my soul upon my lips; for it came, the poor thing, in order to cross over.*¹⁸

*The Fates spun tears for Hecabe and the women of Ilion even when they were being born; for you, however, Dion, having fulfilled well the triumph song of your deeds, the goddesses poured out in vain your wide expectations. You lie dead, esteemed in the spacious city of your fathers, O Dion, who drove my heart mad with love.*¹⁹ --Plato

Aristotle seems to have been less avidly homosexual than Sokrates or Plato, but commentators do attribute homosexual loves to him, including one of his students.²⁰ His Nicomachean Ethics addresses homoerotic friendship in circumspect but favorable terms, which is just as well if that text was related to teaching the young Alexander. He also wrote a lost text on love.

Other major Greek philosophers were, of course, homosexual, but the only other one represented on a stamp is **Zeno** of Kition in Cyprus, founder of the Stoic school much admired by Romans, who taught in Athens for over 50 years. The Stoics, starting with Zeno, seem to have had a reputation as lovers of boys.²¹ Don't confuse this Zeno with Zeno of Elea, beloved of Parmenides,²² famous for his paradoxes.

Politicians and Generals. We moderns have used Plato as an apologist for homosexual love so much that we may forget that a large proportion of the prominent Greek leaders of the classical period freely conducted homosexual affairs (see the appendix). The centuries-long social vigor of Greek homosexuality stemmed in part from its military and political associations.²³

Cyprus 420



Mosaic of Solon, 3d century A.D.

Greece 1450



Figurehead of ship "Epaminondas"

Mexico 1066



Bust of Demosthenes

Solon, greatest lawgiver of Athens and one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, loved the future tyrant of Athens, Pisistratos. We know from his poetry and from biographers that he was enthusiastic about the beauty of youths generally.²⁴

Epaminondas, a Theban general in the period when Thebes defeated Sparta and gained hegemony in southern Greece, may have been the lover of his contemporary and life-long friend, the general Pelopidas. Under Pelopidas and Epaminondas, the Sacred Band, the Thebans' elite military corps of homosexual couples, led the Theban army to several major victories. Epaminondas fought beside and was buried with younger lovers.²⁵

Demosthenes led Athens in the last years of its political independence. He was a great orator but perhaps less than great leader, steadfastly refusing to make peace with his archenemy Philip of Macedon and pushing Athens and Thebes into a disastrous war with the greater power. Demosthenes is reputed to have had a somewhat intemperate desire for both young boys and women.²⁶

Greece 1306



Bust of Philip II from his tomb at Vergina

Greece 921



Alexander the Great, from the sarcophagus of the king of Sidon

The classical period of Greece ended when Macedon, a northern Greek state, conquered the south. We know little of Macedonian culture before the period of Philip II, but three generations running of Macedonian kings definitely loved males. Macedon was a violent society: Philip's father, Archelaos, was killed while hunting by a youth he courted;²⁷ Philip was assassinated by a former lover;²⁸ **Alexander the Great** executed the doctor who let his lover, Hephaestion, die.²⁹ Alexander led the cavalry charge which destroyed the Sacred Band when Philip defeated the Thebans and Athenians at Chaironea. Seeing their bodies, Philip, who was educated in Thebes, said, "Perish miserably he who suspects these men did or suffered shame."³⁰ During the Hellenistic period following the conquests of Alexander, the homosexual ethos lost much of its intellectual vigor and military role, while remaining a strong aesthetic influence. The Romans, who conquered Greece in the second century B.C., did not carry on the tradition of love between politically equal citizens, which had been the flower of Greek homosexuality.

NOTES

Catalogue numbers are Scott's. Translations are mine unless noted, from the Loeb Classical Library text. The best secondary sources in English on this subject are Greek Homosexuality by Kenneth Dover and Sexual Life in Ancient Greece by Hans Licht, both currently in print.

1. Wilde, Oscar. "A Few Maxims For the Instruction of the Over-Educated." Complete Works of Oscar Wilde. Collins, 1981, p. 1203.
2. See, e.g., Homer, Iliad, XVIII, 80 ff., 316 ff. and XIX 209 ff., 314 ff.
3. Dover, Kenneth. Greek Homosexuality. Harvard, 1968, pp. 196-199.
Licht, Hans (pseudonym of Paul Brandt). Sexual Life In Ancient Greece. Rutledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1956, pp. 449-452.
4. Greek Lyric I. Loeb Classical Library. Harvard, 1982, p. 67. Tr. David A. Campbell.
5. Valerius Maximus book IX, ch. 12, 7.
6. Encomium for Theoxenos (fragment). Tr. C. M. Bowra. Pindar. Oxford, 1964, p. 275.
7. See, e.g., Athenaios Deipnosophistai XIII, 601a.
8. Licht, 138.
9. Athenaios XIII, 582d and 598d.
10. Id. 604f. Also Athenaeus VI. Loeb Classical Library. Harvard, 1980, p. 197, note a.
11. Frag. 652, quoted in Licht, p. 422.
12. Quoted in Athenaios XIII, 564d.
13. Theognis 1365-1366. Elegy and Iamb. Loeb Classical Library. Harvard, 1931, p. 399.
14. Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation To the Greeks, IV, 47.
15. Pausanias. Description of Greece. Elis I, 11, 3.
16. Plato. Symposium 177d, 198d.
Xenophon Memorabilia i, 3, 9, 12; iii, 27.
17. Plato. Phaidros. 256c.
18. Diogenes Laertius. Lives and Opinions. III (Plato), 32.
19. Id. 30.
20. Athenaios XIII, 566e.
Burton, Richard F. The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night. Burton Club, n.d. Vol. 10, p. 185, Terminal Essay D, "Pederasty."
21. Athenaios XIII, 563e and 565a.
22. Plato. Parmenides. 127b.
23. Licht, 456-459; Dover, 189-194.
24. Plutarch. Solon. I, 2-3.
25. Plutarch. Pelopidas, IV, 3; Erotikos, 761.
Athenaios XIII, 605a.
26. Athenaios XIII, 592f.
27. Bulliet, C.J. Venus Castina. Covici, Friede, Inc., 1933, p. 59.
28. Diodorus Siculus XVI, 93, 3 ff.
29. Arrian. Anabasis of Alexander. VII, 14,4.
30. Plutarch. Pelopidas. XVIII, 5.
On the homosexuality of Philip and Alexander generally, see Mary Renault, The Nature of Alexander. Pantheon, 1975.

APPENDIX

Greeks for whom we have evidence of homosexual behavior. This list is limited to personalities significant enough to be listed in Webster's Biographical Dictionary (G. & C. Merriam Co., 1976), from which I have taken the dates shown. All dates are B.C. unless noted. If you know of others, would like references for any of these persons or know of stamps not listed in the GLHS handbook which may portray them, please write me at 1204 Columbia Dr., NE, Albuquerque, NM 87106.

- Agathokles. 361-289. Ruler of Syracuse.
 Agathon. Late 5th cent. Athenian tragic poet.
 Agesilaos II. d. ca. 360. Spartan king and general.
 Aischines. 389-314. Athenian politician.
 Aischylos. 525-456. Athenian tragic poet.
 Alexander III ("the Great"). 356-323. Macedonian king and conqueror.
 Alkaios. fl. ca. 600. Mytilenean lyric poet.
 Alkibiades. 450-404. Athenian politician and general.
 Anakreon. 572?-?488. Ionian lyric poet.
 Antigonos II Gonatus. 319?-239. Macedonian king.
 Archelaos. d. 399. Macedonian king.
 Archidamos III. r. 360-338. Spartan king.
 Aristides ("the Just"). 530?-?468. Athenian politician and general.
 Aristippos. 435?-?356. Kyrenean philosopher.
 Aristogeiton. See Harmodios.
 Aristoteles. 384-322. Athenian/Macedonian philosopher.
 Asklepiades of Samos. fl. 3rd cent. Poet and epigrammatist.
 Athenaios. late 2d-early 3rd cent. A.D. Scholar.
 Bakchylides. 5th cent. Lyric poet.
 Bion. fl. 3d or 2d cent. Pastoral poet.
 Demetrios Phalereos. 345?-283. Athenian politician.
 Demetrios I Soter. d. 150. King of Syria.
 Demosthenes. 385?-322. Athenian politician.
 Empedokles. 5th cent. Philosopher and statesman.
 Epaminondas. 418?-362. Theban general and statesman.
 Epikuros. 342?-270. Philosopher.
 Euripides. 5th cent. Athenian tragic poet.
 Harmodios and Aristogeiton. d. 514. Athenian lovers, assassins of tyrant Hipparchos.
 Hieron I. d. 466. Tyrant of Syracuse.
 Hipparchos. d. 514. Tyrant of Athens, brother of Hippias.
 Hippias. fl. late 6th cent. Tyrant of Athens.
 Ibykos. 6th cent. Lyric poet.
 Kimon. 507?-499. Athenian politician and general.
 Kleomenes III. 255-219. Spartan king.
 Kritias. d. 403. Athenian politician.
 Lukianos of Samosata. 2d cent. A.D. satirist.
 Lykurgos. 9th cent (trad.). Spartan lawgiver.
 Lysander. d. 395. Spartan general.
 Lysias. 450?-?380. Athenian orator.
 Meleagros. 1st cent. Epigrammatist and anthologist.
 Parmenides. 5th cent. Elean philosopher.
 Pausanios of Sparta. Early 5th cent. Spartan general.
 Pelopidas. d. 364. Theban general.
 Periander. d. 585. Tyrant of Corinth.
 Pheidias. 5th cent. Athenian sculptor.
 Philippos II. 382-336. Macedonian king.
 Pindaros. 522?-443. Theban lyric poet.
 Pisistratos. d. 527. Tyrant of Athens.
 Platon. 427?-347. Athenian philosopher.
 Polykrates. d. ca. 522. Tyrant of Samos.
 Ptolemaios IV. 242-204. Egyptian king.
 Rhianos of Crete. 3d cent. Alexandrian scholar and poet.
 Sappho. fl. ca. 600. Lesbian lyric poet.
 Sokrates. 470?-399. Athenian philosopher.
 Solon. 638?-599. Athenian politician.
 Sophokles. 496?-406. Athenian tragic poet.
 Stesichoros. 640?-?550. Sicilian lyric poet.
 Straton. 2d cent. A.D. Sardinian poet.
 Themistokles. 527?-?460. Athenian politician and general.
 Theognis. 6th. cent. Megaran elegiac poet.
 Theokritos. 3d. cent. Syracusan pastoral poet.
 Xenophon. 434?-?355. Athenian mercenary general and author.
 Zeno of Kition. late 4th-early 3d cent. Athenian philosopher (Stoic).
 Zeno of Elea. 5th. cent. Elean philosopher.

B. G. P. S.

Interested in joining the British Gay Philatelic Society? Contact Chris Rogers, 41 Portville Road, Lenenshulme, Manchester, M19 3DN, England. Chris has mentioned GLHS several times in his journal.

HELP!

We need articles for forthcoming Journals. Come on, brothers and sisters, how about writing an article about your favorite gay person shown on a stamp? Any other timely philatelic news is also welcome.

Emile Nelligan

Jim from Canada wrote us that the Quebecois poet Emile Nelligan (1879-1941) appeared on a stamp which illustrates his poem "Le Vaisseau d'Or" (The Golden Vessel) in 1979 (Scott #818). Nelligan was a follower, poetically, of Verlaine, Rimbaud and Baudelaire. It's obvious that he was gay. Jim says that he doesn't have biographical information on him, as most of it is in French. Is there anyone out there who can help us in researching this person more thoroughly?

A Gay Time at "NATIONAL"

Several members of GLHS met for brunch at Clyde's Restaurant in Greenwich Village (New York City). Everyone had a great time passing around covers and getting to know one another better, although the waiters were somewhat bemused by it all. The group visited "NATIONAL '84," at Madison Square Garden, to see Paul's exhibit and to cruise among the dealers' tables. Special thanks to our Social Director, Nildo Harper, for making our first official brunch a success.

AWARDS

Paul Hennefeld's exhibit "Alternate Lifestyles of Famous People has recently won the following awards:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Sept. 14-16 | STAMPFEST '84, New York City:
Gold and ATA Silver |
| Oct. 5-7 | SOUTHWESTPEX '84, Los Alamos, NM:
Grand Award
Best in Class (Topical)
APS Best Exhibit Entered
ATA Best Topical
Jean Davis Award (Best Topical) |
| Oct. 26-28 | NOJEX '84, Secaucus, NJ:
Silver and ATA Bronze |
| Nov. 15-18 | NATIONAL '84, New York City:
Vermeil and ATA Gold |