

Masters of their art

Exhibition at The Taos Gallery showcases works by Gootgeld and Hills

Staff report

While a broad exhibition focuses on artists termed "Living Masters" at the Taos Fall Arts Festival, a local gallery puts the spotlight on two of its own shining stars. A reception in celebration of this recognition for Steven Gootgeld and Jeffrey Hills will take place Saturday (Oct. 3), 5-7 p.m., at The Taos Gallery's new location at 133 Bent St.



F Y I

Masters show

■ **When:** Saturday (Oct. 3), 5-7 p.m.

■ **Where:** The Taos Gallery, 133 Bent St.

■ **Admission:** Free, open to public

■ **Information:** (575) 758-3911

Gallery owner Jan Mellor says she is "very proud, but not surprised, to be able to say that two more of The Taos Gallery artists have gained the prestigious recognition of the title, 'Living Master.' Not surprised because I am witness, on a daily basis, to the dedication, commitment and passion that these artists give to their art. It is an extension of who they are and as such has to be recognized. The fact that it is recognized by a committee of their peers gives it even more meaning."

Gootgeld is a master ceramicist and sculptor;

Hills is a master woodworker.

Asked in a press release what it means to receive this recognition by one's peers, Gootgeld said, "My first reaction is immense gratitude for the art community's recognition of my work. In developing my sculpture, I have taken a leap of faith to create pieces that reflect what my heart longs for and must create ... regardless of what my mind may deem 'accessible' or 'mainstream.' The result is a genre of ceramic sculpture that is not immediately definable, yet architectural in form and based on my passion for exploring existential and cosmic ideas."

He said it took a great deal of courage to show his new direction publicly in 2001. "It seemed a miracle to simultaneously receive awards. Having been selected for the Living Masters Exhibition is a milestone, as well as a call for a deeper personal reconsideration and commitment to my life and work. The recent economic situation placed occasional doubt in my path. A friend even told me that I should move to a city and take up an engineering position to be 'responsible.' What seemed like doubt became my teacher."

Instead, he said he decided to follow his heart and "deepen my commitment to art expression and creation. That decision became a personal crossroads in my life that accelerated me forward. It is impor-



Courtesy photo

'Legacy Coffee Table' by Jeffrey Hills



tant to share one's passion for creativity. This can manifest in many ways ... the obvious being placed in a great gallery, but also working artistically with kids, apprenticeship, workshops and networking with other artists."

Along the same lines, Hills said in the release, "To be honored and recognized by the art community of Taos is truly special. I am especially happy for my many 'Legacy Furniture' clients who have been so supportive over the years."

He adds that his greatest pleasure comes from designing and building "legacy furniture, where aesthetics, wood engineering and master craftsmanship come together to build a piece of furniture that can be handed down from generation to generation. To be selected as a Living Master doing what gives me my greatest pleasure is truly special ... With my recent publication in *Fine Wood Working's How to Design Furniture*, this has been a most rewarding year."

Other artists also recognized as Living Masters in previous years and connected with The Taos Gallery are Carlos Barela, James Rannefeld, Richard Hawley and Tupper Hawley.

'Cubist Ocean Wave' by Steven Gootgeld

Courtesy photo