



Rick Romancito

Patrons of the 2013 Fall Arts Festival Opening Reception await the announcement of its Distinguished Artist Awards.

Just the facts

Taos Fall Arts Festival is facing big changes this year, so what's with all the rumors?

By Rick Romancito

It's not going to be easy to begin with. The folks behind this year's Taos Fall Arts Festival are already facing some big changes, the first and biggest being the loss of the Taos Civic Plaza Convention Center as its primary venue.

Undaunted, the festival board is staying the course and not surprisingly are approaching the changes creatively.

Now, if only some people wouldn't keep spreading totally unfounded rumors.

The latest is the idea that the festival will be taking place in Kit Carson Park.

"Absolutely not true," says the board's co-president Deborah Rael-Buckley. "I don't know where that's coming from. I just know that people talk

and they know that we're not going to be in the convention center, and they obviously haven't looked at the website because we update it daily — it is definitely not going to be held there."

Another rumor is one Rael-Buckley had expressed to her face. She said a person she spoke with commended her on what a great job she has as co-president of the board (with Paul Figueroa). For the record, Rael-Buckley said all the of Taos Fall Arts Festival board are not paid a penny. "I have a job. I'm an artist," Rael-Buckley said. "For some reason a lot of people think we're all paid. It's entirely volunteer."

The reality, she said, is that the festival can only be produced each year "with sales from the previous year," which means the financial margins are "pretty skinny." The only people who are paid are

the sales staff (hourly wage, plus a commission) and the set-up crew. "None of them are board members," Rael-Buckley said. "They're all people who come in to help. We pay 60 percent commission to the artists (whose work sells), and also marketing for the event, around \$6,000 in awards, and after all that is done it comes out to about 12 percent profit."

She said the "glory days" when the festival was run as a fundraising arm of Holy Cross Hospital's Taos Medical Services Foundation are long gone. (To be clear, in 2009, the foundation's president Diane Enright said the split was largely the result of the Fall Arts Committee and the Holy Cross Hospital Foundation "going in different directions.")

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That's it. Anyone who says the board is making money from the event is wrong.

The event, which will be celebrating its 40th anniversary Sept. 26-Oct. 5, is actually doing something this year that is a refreshing change of pace and one that may herald this as truly a town-wide festival.

"After losing its home at the Taos Convention Center last year, the Board of the Taos Fall Arts Festival was challenged to rethink how and where they wanted to stage the festival," a festival statement reads. "The show will be staged at several locations around the central core of Taos."

Visitors to the event will be able to take a walking tour of each portion. "The walking tour is seven-tenths of a mile through history, architecture and art. It will begin at the Kachina Lodge, one of the original locations for the festival, where part of the miniatures and the juried show — Taos Selects — will be staged. The Taos Art Museum's Fechin Studio will host the Distinguished Achievement Awards. The Stable's Gallery will be the location of more of the Taos Selects show. The Taos Inn will exhibit an expanded version of the Memorial Wall throughout the inn and early shows will be scheduled as well, honoring cultural music, dance and spoken word."

Last year, the festival tried having a film/video component, but putting it on the stage of Bataan Hall was too out of the way, there was a lot of outside noise, and not many people took the time to see it. This year, local filmmaker Steven Gootgeld has organized a Taos Fall Arts Film Festival, which will be hosted by the University of New Mexico's Harwood Museum of Art. Its theme will be "Honoring The Land" and to prepare for it, Gootgeld will lead a two-week film workshop for teens at the museum.

The Mural Room at the Historic Taos County Courthouse will be the location of an independently curated photography show and the nearby Guadalupe Gym will present



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The Taos Open traditionally features works by new and emerging artists. At the 2013 show, a video/film element was added, a portion of which can be glimpsed in the background here.

the popular Taos Open, Wearable Art, Youth Art Show and Kid's Give Back Program.

During the 10 days of the festival, there will be artist demos, tours of public art collections, such as the Fire Hall Art Collection (housed in the Taos Volunteer Fire Department headquarters) and the Taos Public Library Collections, plus school tours for students are also planned. Throughout the days of the festival, a "passport" will be given to visitors, which will make them eligible to a group of prizes, including donated art, services, and lodging packages.

"The Paseo," organized by Matt Thomas, is an opening night event, "where local, regional and national artists will have a chance to stage exciting ephemeral, film projections, and other time-based and content-based artwork, designed to move people along the walking tour of the exhibitions."

Now, try fitting all that into one venue.

For more information on the 40th annual Taos Fall Arts Festival, visit taosfallarts.com or email tfavolunteer@gmail.com.



At the 2013 event, April Werner poses beside her painting "Decoding Gender."