

UP FRONT

Sound of inspiration

Christa Marquez lands her 'infinity' series at Pompadour Gallery at Salon X

By Teresa Dovalpage

Christa Marquez's favorite sound is that of water: rain, waves, the ocean crashing over the rocks. She gets her best ideas when swimming and from being in nature. And her affinity for the color blue — one of her present favorites is "Mayan blue," a natural pigment used by the Aztecs in ceremonies — may also be related to her love of water. Yet the California-born, Kansas-raised artist has chosen the Southwestern desert to live and work.

"Taos has a thriving and welcoming artist community with many opportunities to show, see, learn about and engage in discussions about art," Marquez said.

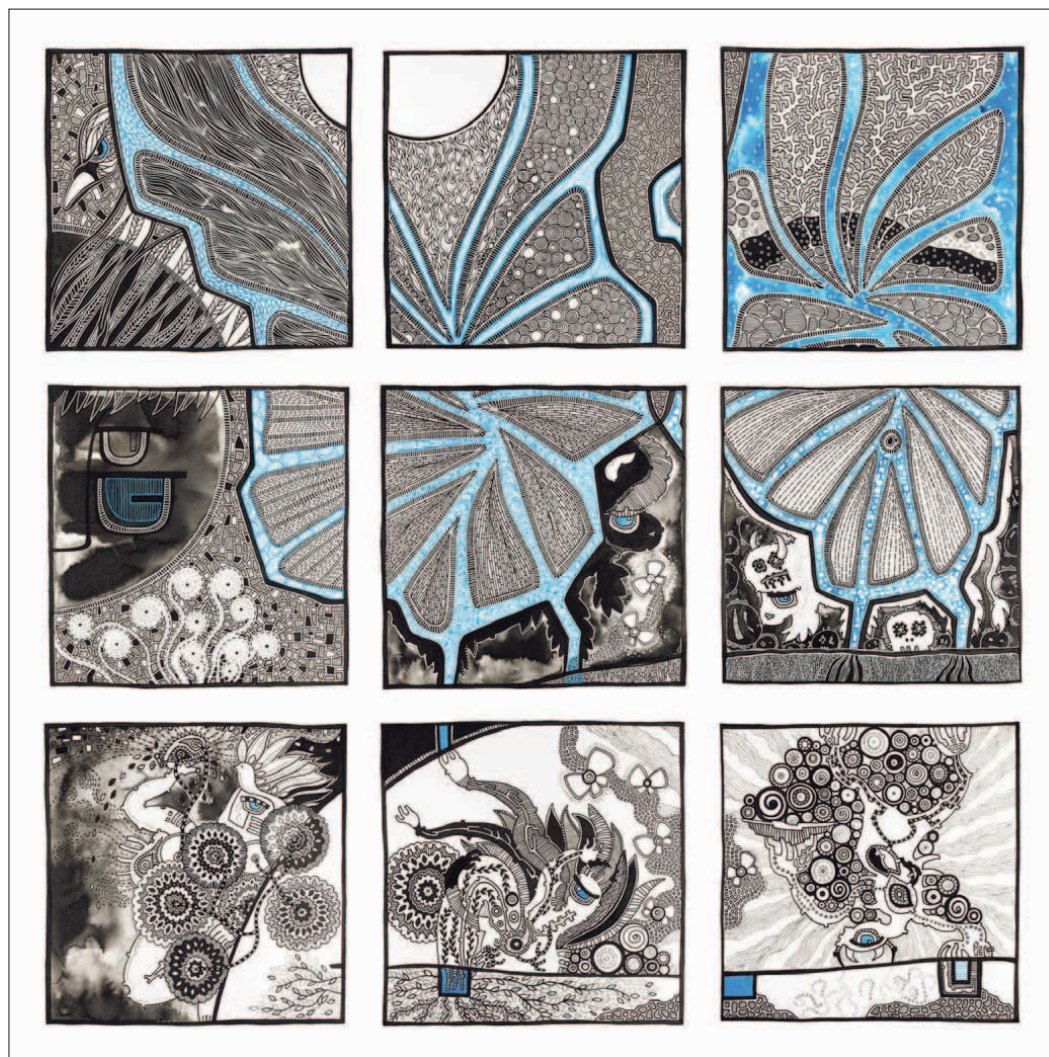
An opening reception for Marquez's one-woman exhibition, titled "infinity No.2," is planned Saturday (Jan. 16), 5-7 p.m., at Pompadour Gallery in Salon X, 226 Paseo del Pueblo Norte. It will showcase the artist's woodcut block prints, ink drawings and Claybord pieces. This is the second installation of her traveling "infinity" exhibitions, the first of which was mounted in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Marquez said "infinity No.1" came to life when Robert Bean, the curator of Beyond our Natural Borders Visiting Artist Program in Little Rock, was vacationing in Taos.

"We met at the Taos Artist Collective, where I was exhibiting at the time," Marquez recalls. "He was interested in my work and asked if I would be interested in showing in Little Rock. I agreed, and by last August sent 53 pieces of art for the two-month show."

The "infinity No.1" exhibition returned to Taos last November and took a new life here. "Soon after I met Alan Vetter (AKA 'Al Dente' of local satirical Vegas lounge music act, Vanilla Pop), the curator for the Pompadour Gallery, and we discussed exhibiting 'infinity No.2' at the Pompadour Gallery this January," Marquez said.

As far as the upcoming location for



Courtesy image

'Believe,' artwork by Christa Marquez

"infinity No.3," Marquez is now considering the Linda Matney Gallery in Williamsburg, Virginia. "The gallery, that has their own collection of Blanche Lazzell whiteline prints, has an interest in my whiteline woodcut prints," she said.

Her Taos show, "infinity No.2," includes 53 works of art from the last five years. Among them are two large-scale works consisting of multiple pieces that

form a whole image when hung together. "The number eight is a favorite of mine, and sideways it reads as infinity," Marquez explains. "That is how I came up with the name. I labeled the initial one 'No.1,' since it was the first of what I intended to be a traveling show."

When Marquez came to Taos more than five years ago, she bonded with the land and light and enjoyed the artist

community so much that she vowed to return. Two years and a half later, she moved to Taos, and she has been quite busy since. She is involved with the community as both an artist and a supporter of the arts. Part of her weekly routine is to get *The Taos News* on Thursday, sit down with her highlighter and mark all the events that she can't wait to see.

"I am endlessly amazed by the depth



Teresa Dovalpage

Christa Marquez at work



F Y I

Opening reception

■ **When:** Saturday (Jan. 16), 5-7 p.m.

■ **Where:** Pompadour Gallery at Salon X, 226 Paseo del Pueblo Norte

■ **Admission:** Free

■ **Information:** (575) 758-1584

of creative people who live here and the wonderful work they produce, including the collaborative events that we are blessed to have year after year: Hot off the Press, Taos Fall Arts Festival, Paseo and recently, Pressing Through Time: 150 Years of Printmaking in Taos, to name a few," she said. "The incredibly talented and knowledgeable people who operate the galleries and museums here in Taos are also an integral part of our art community."

Marquez shows her work locally at Wilder Nightingale Fine Art and The Taos Art Museum Store. She also has a piece, a whittled woodcut print, showing in the Contemporary Print Exhibition for Pressing Through Time at the Taos Art Museum at Fecchin House.

Marquez said she studied printmaking at Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina, the Provincetown Art Association Museum School in Massachusetts and Colonial Williamsburg's Press Room in

Virginia.

She now teaches several courses at the University of New Mexico-Taos. One was developed after attending an Equity Leadership Conference in Trinchera Ranch, Colorado, which tackled issues like the importance of increasing awareness of equitable teaching practices in higher education. "The conference was a very moving experience," Marquez said. "I had previously taught art with the aspects of personal expression and emotional healing as key components. After the leadership conference, I was called to develop a course that specifically incorporated healing from issues of oppression and discrimination."

The course that developed out of the conference is titled "Retablos: Past, Present, Future." It teaches *retablo* making and focuses on three areas, including its historic origins and practices in New Mexico, personal storytelling through art and future intentions. Collectively, they are part of the *santo* tradition, described individually as *bultos* (three-dimensional depictions of Catholic saints), *retablos* (two-dimensional paintings on wooden tablets) and *reredos* (altar screens).

"Students will go from traditional representations of the saints to honoring a personal issue to an 'intention retablo' that

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'Xochiquetzal' by Marquez

Courtesy image

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will depict a positive image of overcoming oppression and discrimination," Marquez said. "Students will keep their three pieces, and we may exhibit them at the art depart-

ment's gallery at UNM."

Marquez was recently accepted to the master's degree-granting visual arts program at Vermont College of Fine Arts, a low-residency program that meets on the Vermont Campus for 10 days twice a

year. "The rest of the year, I will work at my home studio here in Taos with local artists and teachers," she said. "This allows me to keep my life here in Taos while earning my MFA. I am thrilled to embark on this exciting next step in my journey."

The exhibit continues through March 12.

The Pompadour Gallery at Salon X located at 226 Paseo del Pueblo Norte. Call (575) 758-1584 or visit christamarquez.com.