

Questa artists think wilderness

Art exhibition celebrates 50th anniversary of the U.S. Wilderness Act

Q By Tempo staff
 Questa's "Thinking Wilderness" event series turns its attention, this month, to the visual arts. "Thinking Wilderness: The Art Show," small works on a big topic, is slated to open with a reception Saturday (Aug. 9), 5-8 p.m., at OCHO Art & Event Space, 8 State Road 38 in Questa.



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Opening reception

■ **When:** Saturday (Aug. 9), 5-8 p.m.

■ **Where:** OCHO Art & Events Space, 8 State Road 38, Questa

■ **Admission:** Free

■ **Information:** (575) 586-2362

Throughout history, artists have played an important role in defining our relationship with nature and "wilderness," event organizer Claire Coté says in a prepared statement. "Prior to the 1800s, most Western art was of religious scenes, allegory, or portraiture. Artists such as painters J. M. W. Turner and John Constable in Great Britain, began to rearrange the entire value system of Western culture, adding an element of awe and reverence for the inherent value of nature. In the United States, the work of

19th-century painters such as Albert Beirstadt and Thomas Moran inspired pride in America's wild landscapes and an interest in preserving them.

"Many artists today continue to build an appreciation for wilderness, offering emotional insights into the legacy of stewardship that is so important to the very self-image of Americans, and certainly to those of us in New Mexico."

"Thinking Wilderness: The Art Show" is hoping to shine a spotlight on this continuing legacy.

Hosted and curated by nonprofit Land, Experience and Art of Place (LEAP) and OCHO Art & Event Space, "Thinking Wilderness: The Art Show" features works by over 25 local and regional artists in a variety of two and three-dimensional mediums. The show continues Questa's participation in the nationwide marking of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, which now protects over 100 million acres of land. Questa itself is surrounded by some of the most beautiful protected lands in the United States.

"Many artists in our area are inspired by wilderness and nature," says Coté. "This show is a study of that muse, in a fitting location. Our goal for the show was to create an opportunity for emerging as well as established artists to come together to express what wilderness means to them."

The show includes small works by photogra-



A monotype by Barrie Andrews appears on publicity materials for the show.

phers Phil Gruiss and René Janiece, beaded hummingbird sculptures by Audrey Kunkel, a barnwood-framed pastel by Beatrice Miera-Medina, oil on canvas by Robert Perez Jr., a bold watercolor or abstract by Martha Shepp, Mimbres-inspired ink on paper by Starr, exquisite small collage by Katherine Elmore, textured ceramics by Roderick Oknich, woodblock prints by Christa Marquez, and much more; a wonderful sampling of northern Taos County talent.

"We've hung some wonderful shows in the past, but the Thinking Wilderness show is one of the most interesting group shows yet," says OCHO's Barrie Andrews.

At the opening reception, hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served to music by Bittersweet Highway and Michael Rael.

People's Choice Awards will be announced at the end of the evening. The "Thinking Wilderness" event series organized by LEAP will continue with the annual NeoRio event at Wild Rivers in the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument on Sept. 6.

This year will feature nationally-known University of New Mexico professor of art, environment, and technology, Andrea Polli. An online residency will finish out the 50th anniversary year with local as well as national and even international "thinkers," each with a week-long platform



Artists S. Harrington and Beatrice Miera-Medina display some of their work.

to share their thoughts, their work, and in dialog forward for each of us to consider wilderness means to us, according to Coté.

"Remote wild lands have informed Questa's history, and wilderness traditions continue unbroken in many ways. Plus this area is County's best kept secret for dramatic hike serene camping. Chevron mine or no Chevron mine, they can't take this away from this little village."

The exhibit is on view through Aug. 17.

For more information or to participate online residency project go to thinkingwilderness.org or call Claire Coté at (575) 586-2362.