

LAND/ART lifts Albuquerque to a new tier in art world

BY MEGAN KAMERICK | NMJB STAFF

Albuquerque's contemporary art scene is finally getting the kind of national attention regularly showered on Santa Fe. And it only took a massive collaboration and a six-month-long show to do it.

The LAND/ART project, taking place June through November, is one of the largest explorations ever mounted of land-based art. Coordinated by 516 ARTS in Albuquerque, it involves more than 25 arts organizations in Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Mountainair, and is one of the biggest artistic collaborations the state has ever seen.

It has already received coverage from national publications, including *Art in America*, one of the premier art publications in the country.

Suzanne Sbarge, executive director of 516 ARTS, said the show feels historic on many levels. The variety of partners, including private galleries, universities, the city of Albuquerque, museums and environmental groups, is unusual, she said. The scope is extremely large and she said visitors from around the country, Canada and Europe tell her they came to Albuquerque specifically because of this show. Numerous art fans from Santa Fe have been coming too, usually via the RailRunner Express.

"It shows everyone that working together pays off," Sbarge said. "We're not separate communities and the impact we can make nationally and internationally is stronger."



COURTESY 516 ARTS

LAND/ART is a six-month-long collaborative project that features gallery works, such as Ted Laredo's "room" (top left) at 516 ARTS, as well as photos from an installation by Katherine E. Bash called "Wind Shirt" (bottom left) and a site-specific work by Basia Irland, who made a book of ice and dotted with it with native seeds before sending it down the Rio Grande.

Lea Rekow, executive director of the Center for Contemporary Arts in Santa Fe, said people can sometimes be territorial in the art world and it's a shift to see the collaborative nature of land-based art fostering collaboration among different institutions.

CCA is among the project collaborators, as is SITE Santa Fe, the Albuquerque Mu-

seum of Art, private galleries and the city of Albuquerque's public art program. But it also involves environmental organizations like the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

Land-based art was introduced in the late 1960s as a movement by New York artists who came West to transform the landscape into works of art. The genre has evolved, Sbarge said, to encompass another strain focusing on art that does not impact the Earth so dramatically. One thing many of the projects do have in common, however, is that you need to get outside to see them.

516 is the information center for all the events and will have gallery-based work. Two new exhibits open there Aug. 1. But many of the works are at sites throughout the Albuquerque area, including Los Poblanos Fields Open Space, Tiguex Park near Old Town, the D-RIDE buses Downtown, the bosque along the Rio Grande, the Anderson-Abruzzo International Balloon Museum, the Albuquerque Museum of Art, Wagner Farms and the San Ysidro Church in Corrales, as well as galleries in Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

Most of the installations are temporary, while others eventually will become part of the landscape, such as Anne Cooper's "Anitya" at Los Poblanos Open Space. It consists of 81 bowls made from New Mexico clay, each full of seed balls. They will sprout various grasses and eventually dissolve into the earth.

Artist Basia Irland created ice books with native seeds embedded in them that she floated down the Rio Grande in June.

Other works featured in LAND/ART are monumental and permanent, such as Star Axis, started by Charles Ross in 1976 in northern New Mexico. The massive sculpture/observatory is 11 stories deep, and will be the focus of one of the many tours.

Performances, films, lectures and poetry readings are also on the schedule. Paul D. Miller, aka DJ Spooky, will perform his

"Terra Nova: Sinfonia Antarctica," a large multimedia work, here in October.

Gilbert said he and Kathleen Shields, one of the LAND/ART organizers who is curating a series of site-specific projects, discussed doing something that would tap into unique aspects of the state.

"New Mexico is a great place to make work, but it's a hard place to get recognized and a hard place to sell contemporary art work," he said.

Land-based art seemed like a natural fit, he said. The state is a place where culture has been intervening in landscape for a long time, starting with petroglyphs and pictographs. Gilbert said the show is also likely to foster more dialog about the evolving nature of land-based art.

Matthew Coolidge, director of the Center for Land Use Interpretation in California, which is doing several installations here, said many see LAND/ART as an historic moment in the movement, or perhaps part of a continuum.

"It's sort of a re-contextualization and a new chapter," he said.

The city of Albuquerque has also used the show as an opportunity to commission another piece for its public art program, said Sherri Brueggemann, director of the program. The selection committee and the Albuquerque Arts Board have recommended a piece by Robert Wilson called "Flyway" made from recycled jetty jacks that dot the bosque and that were originally used to curtail flooding. The decision is awaiting full administrative and City Council approval.

The piece would be located at Coors Boulevard and Bosque Meadows Road near the city of Albuquerque's open space visitors center.

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