

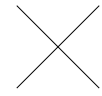


TO TOUCH THE SOIL

A treaty's anniversary opens a way for Navajo people to confront their memories of the Long Walk—and for all Americans to heal from it. **By Kate Nelson**



The seated Navajos were accused of counterfeiting ration tickets at the Bosque Redondo reservation.



Even now, stands of cottonwood, willow, and mesquite marking the course of the Pecos River offer but a tangle of weedy limbs. Around the onetime military post of Fort Sumner, on New Mexico's eastern plains, the bosque has had more than a century to grow taller and thicker. Stand here, in the timeless hush, and you can sense history's heavy weight. The vast sky promises resilience, freedom, and home. But the stark land bears witness to a bleaker past.

On this ground on June 1, 1868, General William T. Sherman and 29 Navajo leaders negotiated an agreement to end one of the darkest chapters in the American story. At the then-40-square-mile expanse known today as Fort Sumner Historic Site/Bosque Redondo Memorial, the Navajos left their X marks on a document outlining a host of requirements in return for the right to go home. Hundreds of miles from this barren place stood four mountains, in New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado—the boundaries of a sacred space within which Navajo people believed they were always meant to live. From late 1863 to 1868, they instead endured a dislocation bred by the zeal of Manifest Destiny.

From the day that they began their Long Walk home, the Navajos, or Diné, rarely spoke of Hwéeldi, their name for “the suffering place.” *Never go there*, children were warned. But as their defining treaty reaches its 150th anniversary, stances are shifting. Fort Sumner and Window Rock, Arizona, capital of the Navajo Nation, will host commemorative events. The state-owned historic site plans new exhibits using the voices of those who were imprisoned—Navajos and Mescalero Apaches—rather than those of curators and historians. As museums and historic places around the world similarly retool their explorations of divisive histories, Bosque Redondo prepares to become a place of inclusion, one with, perhaps, the power to heal.

“There’s a lot of hurt, a lot of resentment, especially among our elders,” says Jonathan Nez, vice president of the Navajo Nation. “A lot say maybe it isn’t time to talk about it. Others say maybe it is. It’s a delicate line for us to walk. But it’s important that, for our way of life to continue, for our language to



PALACE OF THE GOVERNORS PHOTO ARCHIVES 038206 (PREVIOUS PAGES), 001817, 022938, AND 038191 (THESE PAGES)



Clockwise from top: Native people and soldiers stand by one of Fort Sumner's adobe buildings. General James H. Carleton, pictured here around 1866, created the reservation against other officials' concerns about its suitability. A group of Navajos gather by their makeshift shelters.

continue, we need to have a frank discussion about what we went through there. It's time for us to work together."

IN THE 19TH CENTURY, as U.S. leaders asserted control over the American West, clashes erupted. New Mexico's tribal peoples had long weathered times of trouble and peace with Spanish colonists. Now disorder reigned. The resulting years of land grabs, raids and counterraid, massacres, broken treaties, and slave trading have fed—and continue to feed—a library's worth of research. Into this milieu stepped General James H. Carleton, armed with a national mission to subdue the Mescalero and Navajo peoples. In 1862, he ordered Colonel Christopher "Kit" Carson to

region. The campaign led to a scorched-earth siege across the winter of 1863–1864, during which starvation became a tool of war. Bands of Navajos, weak and ill, started surrendering in 1863. By 1866, around 9,000 people had endured the Long Walk to Bosque Redondo. Unknown others remained in hiding. The 53 forced marches over three years, as the Diné surrendered or were captured, have been called New Mexico's Trail of Tears, echoing the relocation of southeastern tribes in the 1830s. At least 500 Navajos died en route. They could lose all their supplies crossing the treacherous Río Grande. Some people drowned. Elderly people or pregnant women who couldn't keep up were shot. They walked in high heat. They walked in snowstorms,

against the United States until President Grant established a reservation on Sierra Blanca in 1873. (Other bands of Apaches fought on. In 1886, Geronimo and his Chiricahua holdouts surrendered, then endured 27 years of captivity in Oklahoma.)

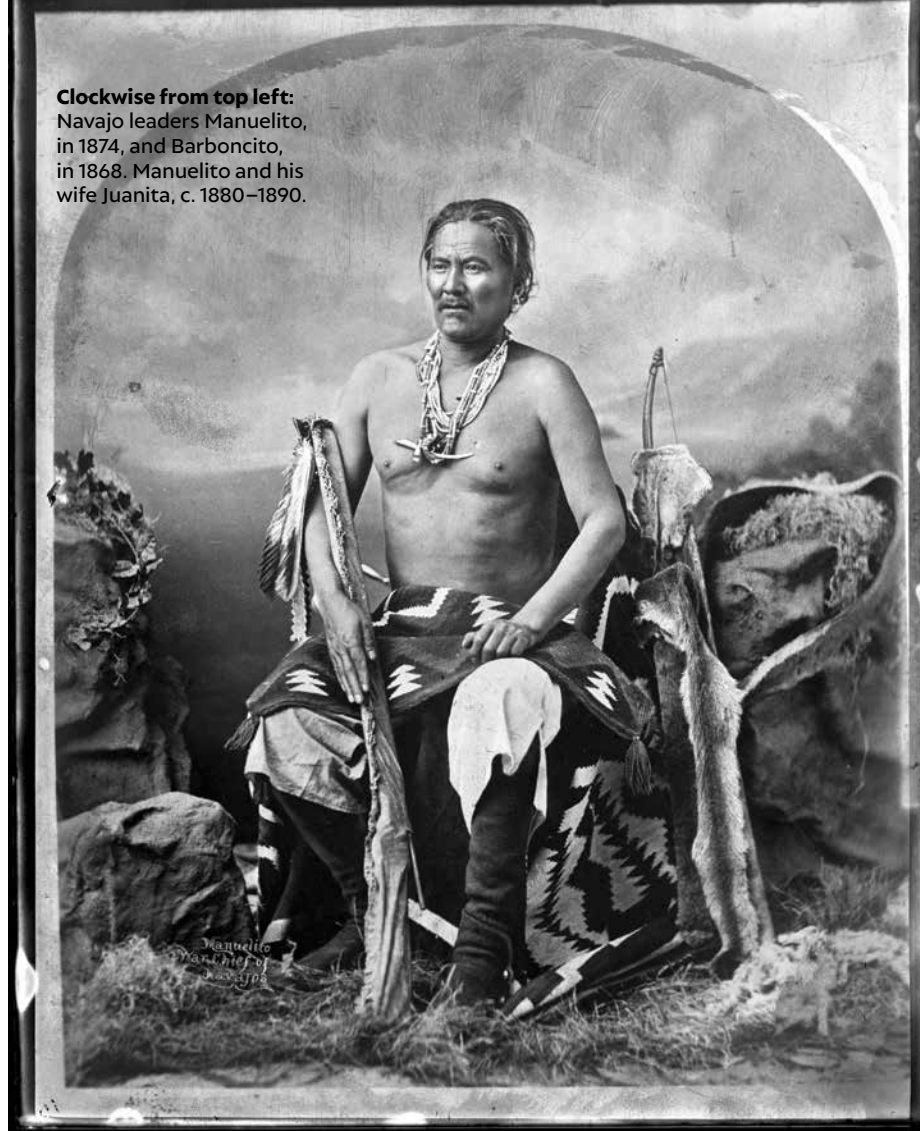
The Navajos languished at Bosque Redondo, too ill to risk a months-long escape through hostile communities. Up to 1,500 of them eventually lay in unmarked graves. U.S. leaders fumed at the million-dollar annual cost. Carleton lost his command in 1866, after which legendary warrior Manuelito and two dozen of his emaciated followers finally surrendered. In 1868, the Navajos refused to plant crops. They had given up. They stood in lines awaiting rations. The reservation had failed.

Sherman hoped to work out a treaty that would send the Navajos to the Oklahoma Territory. Barboncito, elected by Manuelito and other Diné leaders to bargain for their side, stood firm on a return to the land they loved. The men agreed to 20 pages of concessions, including that the Navajos would send their children to U.S. schools, speak English, allow a railroad through their land—they would, in short, assimilate to the American way of life. Given all they had been through, Barboncito said, it was worth it. According to historical accounts, he told his people, "After we get back to our country, it will brighten up again, and the Navajos will be as happy as the land. Black clouds will rise, and there will be plenty of rain."

MORNING SUN WARMS THE SHEER red-cliff backdrop of the Navajo Nation Museum, in Window Rock, as tribal members filter in for an important meeting. On this day, in the late winter of 2018, President Russell Begaye, Vice President Nez, and other officials will sign a proclamation declaring 12 months of treaty commemorations and promise to fund the delivery of the original treaty from the National Archives for a month of public viewings and events.

Surrounding them are 27,000 square miles of Diné land, far more than the 5,200 square miles granted in the treaty. More than 350,000 people claim Navajo affiliation. Navajo weavers and silversmiths rank among the world's best. A massive agricultural enterprise and extensive mineral resources support the tribe's economy. Yet poverty gnaws at its people, along with environmental challenges, encroachments on sacred places,

Clockwise from top left: Navajo leaders Manuelito, in 1874, and Barboncito, in 1868. Manuelito and his wife Juanita, c. 1880–1890.



“After we get back to our country, IT WILL BRIGHTEN UP AGAIN, and the Navajos will be as happy as the land,” BARBONCITO TOLD HIS PEOPLE. “Black clouds will rise, and there will be plenty of rain.”

kill all Mescalero men and move the women and children to Bosque Redondo—a new reservation that others had warned could not sustain crops and was far too remote. Carson instead persuaded Mescalero leader Cadete to surrender and, with more than 400 of his people, leave the Sierra Blanca Mountains, near today's Ruidoso. In January 1863, they stepped onto land long claimed by Comanche and Kiowa peoples at Fort Sumner, too new and too ill-prepared to feed or house them.

Six months later, Carleton ordered Carson to attack the Navajos in today's Four Corners

struggling to keep their horses and sheep alive. They didn't know how to prepare the rations of unfamiliar foods—flour, bacon, and coffee—so ate them raw, then fell ill. The soldiers vowed that better conditions lay ahead. And so they walked.

At Fort Sumner, they were met by the Mescalero, a tribe they had long warred against. With the nation consumed by the Civil War, supplies came rarely. Food turned rancid. Tribal men built housing for the military, even as their own families lived in tattered tepees or holes in the ground.

The water of the Pecos proved too alkaline for drinking, and the river flooded regularly. Cutworms destroyed crops. Firewood lay miles away. Other tribes raided them. At one point, more than 10,000 Native people, soldiers, and military families crowded onto the reservation, making it the most populated place in the New Mexico Territory. (Fewer than 2,000 people live in all of DeBaca County today.)

On November 3, 1865, the Mescaleros slipped away in the night, melting into the mountains, joining Comanches, heading south to Mexico, and continuing their war

“I think about all our ancestors as they signed the treaty,” SAYS JOANN JAYNE, CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE NAVAJO SUPREME COURT. “They had the wisdom, the love, the courage to think about us.” THEY ARE WITH US TODAY AND THEY ARE WATCHING US.

and the erosion of traditional ways.

A tribal leader chants a traditional prayer to open the meeting. Sung in the soft staccato rhythm of Diné, it loops over and around, pulling in even those who cannot decipher the words. The proclamation honoring the treaty, or Naalstoos Sáni, recognizes that the ancestors who signed it ensured the tribe's return to its homeland, protected the Diné way of life, and consecrated a nation-to-nation relationship with the United States. “Many were raped, tortured, and killed, including women in childbirth and children,” it reads.

“Still, we persevered. Our ceremonies preserved the Diné as a people and a culture.”

“I think about all our ancestors as they signed the treaty,” says JoAnn Jayne, chief justice of the Navajo Supreme Court. “They had the wisdom, the love, the courage to think about us. They are with us today and they are watching us.”

President Begaye predicts lines of people, not just Navajos, eager to see the treaty—even though the museum has displayed a replica for years. It represents a moment, he says, when their most honored ancestors proclaimed

their survival. “For them to think, as they put their X there, ‘We’re going back to the sacred mountains, to the rivers, to the deserts, to the horses, to the children and those who remain at Bears Ears and Canyon de Chelly. To return here and live. To touch the river, to touch the soil, to breathe the air.’”

The rest of the meeting concentrates on ways to celebrate the tribe and reverse its problems. They discuss a range of athletic contests—basketball, volleyball, horseshoes, archery, and rodeos. Can they bring in nutritionists? one asks. How about crafting a commemorative coin, hashtags for social media, a logo, new road signs? In the museum lobby, Vice President Nez describes his own idea and its very personal tie. One of the tribe's younger leaders, at 42, he rose in government service as his health plummeted. “I was on

the road a lot,” he says. “In Navajo culture, they feed their leaders. If I had eight meetings in a day, that was eight meals. One day, a young man says to me, ‘Mr. Nez, you tell us to take care of our bodies, but look at you.’”

At five foot eleven, he weighed 300 pounds. That was 2011. He and his wife threw out processed food, and he started to walk. Then he ran. Today he completes marathons and trains for 100-mile runs. He’s lean and healthy and speaks a gospel of starting over. Around the last week of May, he’ll lead a group of runners—anyone who wants to come along—from Bosque Redondo to Window Rock. He figures the 300-mile Long Run will take a week.

“This is not just for Navajos,” he says of the anniversary events. “It’s for all the folks in New Mexico, everywhere. It’s time for us to forgive each other and heal, to put our baggage down and move forward with a whole new outlook on life.”

Far from there, in Moriarty, which is closer to Fort Sumner than to the Navajo Nation, Ezekiel Argeanas plans his own commemoration. The Navajo teen, who was adopted at



“This is not just for the Navajos,” SAYS VICE PRESIDENT JONATHAN NEZ. “It’s for all the folks in New Mexico, everywhere. IT’S TIME FOR US to forgive each other and heal.”

age 11, began visiting the historic site out of curiosity about his roots. “The first time I was there, it was hard,” he says. “A lot of Navajos are forbidden to go there. I asked a medicine man to perform a ceremony before I went.”

A small flock of churro sheep—the traditional, revered breed of Navajo people—grazes at Fort Sumner, and that gave Argeanas an idea for a project to earn his Eagle Scout badge. He raised money to pay a Shiprock weaver to turn the sheep’s wool into a traditional blanket dress for the historic site. He also commissioned signs to explain the sheep’s role in sustaining his people.

“This is to honor my ancestors’ legacy and their strength and knowledge and pay respect to Native weavers,” he says. “Some textbooks don’t tell about this. I’m proud to help people understand what was there.”

Finding a balance for talking about a past that some tribal members would rather keep quiet has challenged Navajo Nation Museum director Manuelito Wheeler. For him, the treaty helps provide an answer. The document is alive. To practice on the Navajo Nation, lawyers must prove their competency with its mandates. “Navajo people have respect for it,” he says. “It’s come to symbolize tribal sovereignty, the wisdom of Navajo ancestors, and their strength.” Even more, he says, its anniversary “is forcing all these discussions to happen now.”

Some tribal members hold firm to the taboo against visiting the site, he says, because “the land remembers.” Even so, the site’s managers say more Navajos have come to see it, helping to boost attendance from 3,500 to 10,000 in the past year. “That’s us saying we’re ready

to deal with it,” Wheeler says. “We’re ready to acknowledge it and let it make us stronger. I hope that all people will understand this atrocity and never let it happen again. I hope America learns about this.”

FOR DECADES, FORT SUMNER was mainly known as the place where Billy the Kid died, in 1881. His grave lies on the northeastern edge of the historic site’s property. Fans of the outlaw would drive out, see the grave, visit its since-closed mini-museum, then spy the larger historic site in the distance. “It’s amazing how many visitors come to see where Billy the Kid was shot and leave changed by Bosque Redondo,” says Patrick Moore, director of the state’s historic sites. “I’ve seen it happen. They walk away crying, because it’s so emotional.”

It wasn’t always that way. Fort Sumner Historic Site used to focus solely on military life. In 1990, Navajo students found themselves perplexed at how to interpret the Bosque Redondo experience when the site gave them no clues. They wrote a protest and left it in the piled stones of a memorial cairn:

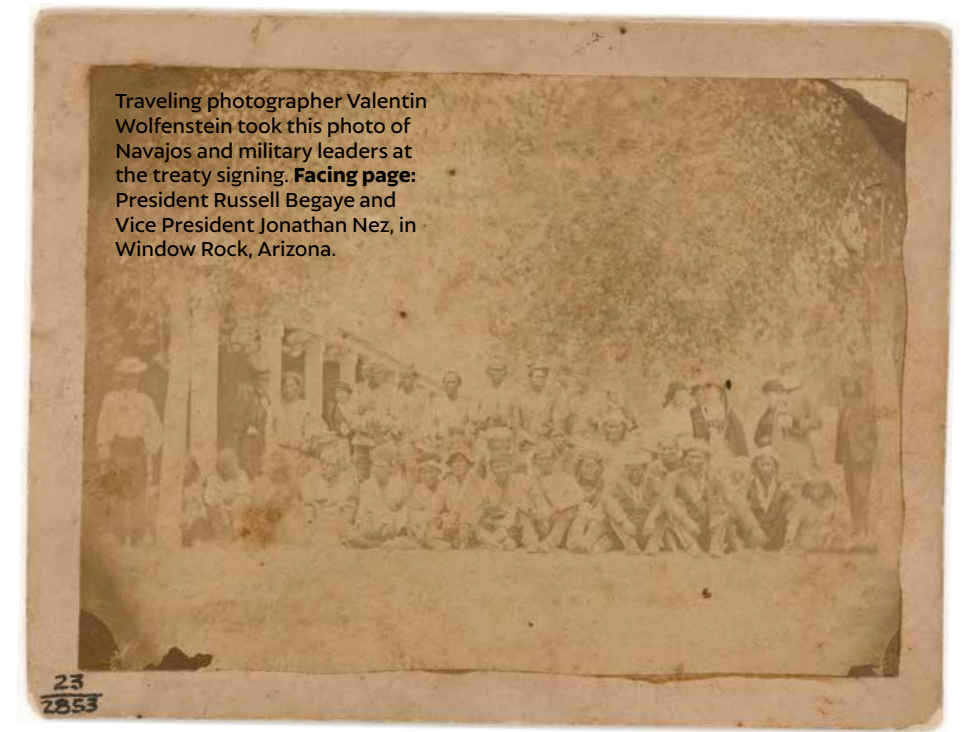
We find Fort Sumner Historic Site discriminating and not telling the true story behind what really happened to our ancestors in 1864–1868. It seems to us there is more

information on Billy the Kid, which has no significance to the years 1864–1868. We therefore declare that the museum show and tell the true history of the Navajos and the United States military. We are a concerned young generation of Navajos for the future.

Twenty young men and women signed their names. Site staff found it, and the plea turned into a legislative push. It took time, but in 2005 the Bosque Redondo Memorial debuted a futuristic building that blends elements of an Apache tepee and a Navajo hogan. In 2017, officials from the historic site began meeting with both tribes in order to reconfigure its exhibits so that the voices of Mescalero and Navajo people dominate. Tours will delve deeper into that history, and students will get hands-on experience in building shelters and other survival techniques.

The new exhibits will take form in 2019, but visitors this summer can see conceptual drawings and hear the first cache of oral histories gathered for it. One thing that won’t change is a set of murals curling through a hallway between exhibit areas. One side features the work of self-described “cowboy painter” Mike Scovel, who illustrated the military side of the ordeal. The realistic style he chose grows more chilling by a trick of the convex side his mural is on. No matter where you stand, the soldiers’ eyes follow you, as do the tips of their guns. It manifests a sense of the constant paranoia tribal people must have felt. Even so, Scovel hints at human complexities: A soldier bends to pick up a dropped doll; another offers a canteen of lifesaving water as a superior lunges toward him, the word “no” on his lips.

On the concave side, Navajo artist Shonto Begay crafted a neo-impressionist interpretation of his people’s story. In Van Gogh-like



Traveling photographer Valentin Wolfenstein took this photo of Navajos and military leaders at the treaty signing. **Facing page:** President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez, in Window Rock, Arizona.

strokes, he conjures men, women, and children, each one’s face individually conceived, as they trudge forward. “It’s like a dream,” he says, facing his work. “It was hard. It was painful. In the end, it was cathartic, too. I needed to express these things. Each stroke is a syllable—syllables to words, words to sentences. It’s a prayer, a ceremonial event.”

He switches to Diné, a language he was beaten for speaking after being scooped up from shepherding duties at age five and trucked to a boarding school. He ran away repeatedly, and for good, as a teen. Jail awaited parents who kept their children home. The forced assimilation scarred tribes all across the nation. Besides losing language and religion, many were baffled by their post-schooling reservation lives. Begay says he sees signs of a renaissance, with Diné lessons in Navajo classrooms and a return to traditional

ceremonies. “The very fact that we can still speak the language and introduce ourselves by our clans is a victory,” he says. “We still celebrate who we are. I feel optimistic.”

Beyond the memorial building, a trail connects what’s left of the military buildings and a parade ground, the sheep pasture, a river path, and two monuments to the tribes. One is participatory: the pile of stones, with mementos left by visitors. Kachinas. Feathers. Money. A Purple Heart. A casino chip. A sobriety medallion topped by a pinch of white cornmeal. The other was built in 1994. It bears a plaque with words by former Navajo Nation President Peterson Zah, who was also one of the famed World War II code talkers. In Diné, it tells of the people, their language, the four sacred peaks, and the strength of the clans. It ends, as all Beauty Way prayers do, with four repetitions of *Hózhó Náhasdlií’* (“Beauty is restored”).

Begay stands before it and silently removes his turquoise earring, placing it on top. The soil around him is saturated with people’s suffering, but by their prayers and offerings, he and the others who come deliver a balm to the past and an oath to the future. *We survived this, they say. We are here. We remember.*

Hózhó Náhasdlií’.
Hózhó Náhasdlií’.
Hózhó Náhasdlií’.
Hózhó Náhasdlií’. **NM**

Kate Nelson is the magazine’s interim editor in chief.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION (P20819) / VALENTIN WOLFENSTEIN

The Commemoration

Events marking the 150th anniversary of the Navajos’ 1868 treaty with the U.S. government kick off the week before the annual June 1 Treaty Day, when Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez leads a Long Run from Fort Sumner to Window Rock, Arizona. Participants can tackle the entire route or just a portion. For details, go to nnsdp.org.

Among **June 1** festivities in Window Rock, the Navajo Nation Museum displays the original document for a month, with lectures and other events throughout the year (Arizona SR 264 and Loop Road, 928-871-7941, navajonationmuseum.org).

On **June 8**, the Fort Sumner Historic Site/Bosque Redondo Memorial offers a sneak peek of its planned exhibitions, followed, on **June 9**, with traditional dances, foods, artisans, and speakers from tribal and state governments. A 6.5-mile walk and run from the memorial to Fort Sumner High School symbolizes the Long Walk (3647 Billy the Kid Road, Fort Sumner, 575-355-2573, nmhistoricsites.org and bosqueredondomemorial.com).

Year-round, the historic site is open for free Wednesday–Sunday, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. It includes a small museum, shop, picnic area, the Old Fort Site Trail, and a ¾-mile river walk.

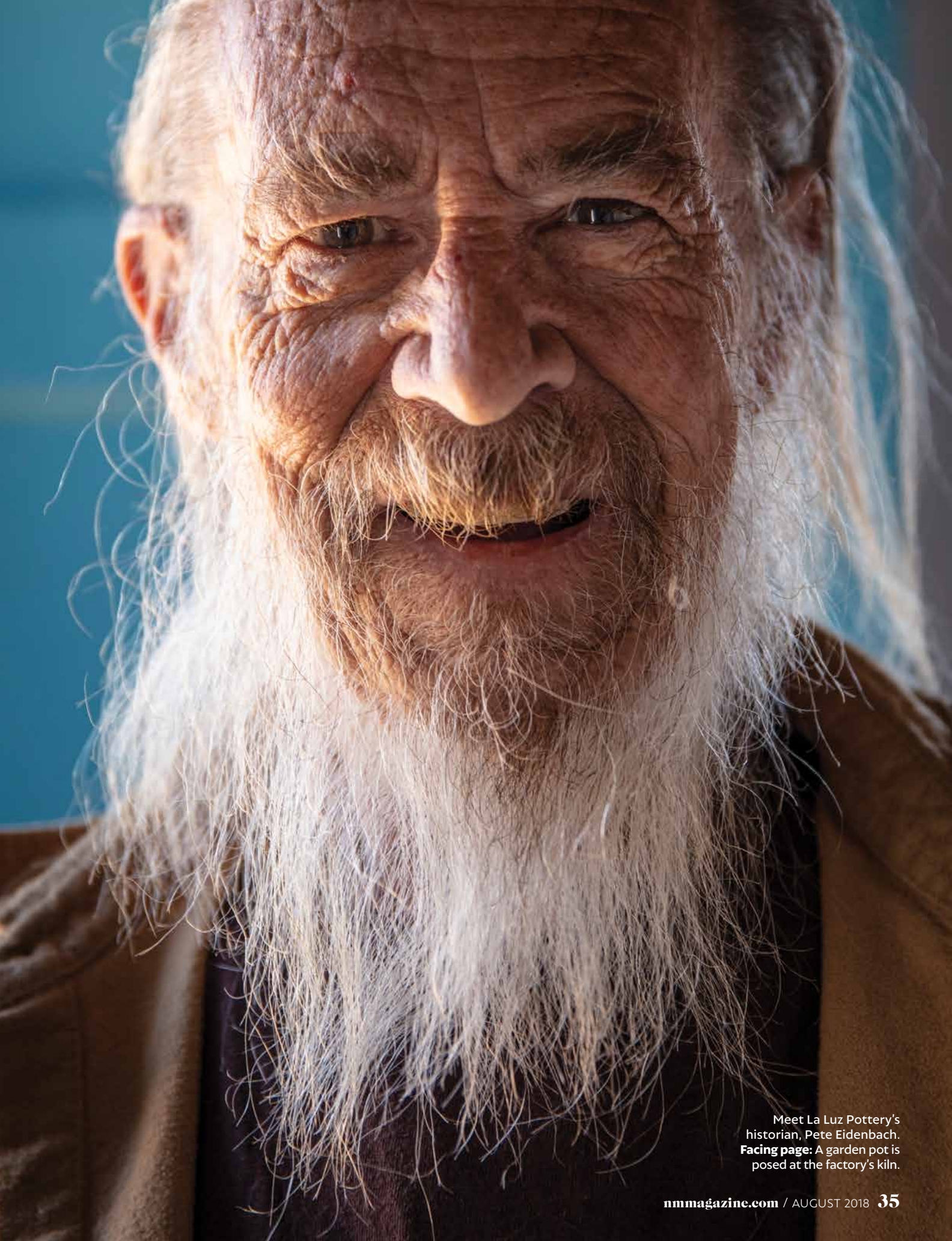
A large, arched brick kiln with a terracotta pot inside. The kiln is made of reddish-brown bricks and has a dark interior. A large, rounded terracotta pot with a handle is placed on a small wooden stand in front of the kiln's opening. The background is a bright blue sky.

The Fire Still Burns

La Luz Pottery briefly gleamed near Alamogordo. Its legend now ignites the desires of collectors.

BY KATE NELSON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEN JUDGE

A close-up portrait of Pete Eidenbach, a man with a long, flowing white beard and hair. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle expression. The background is a solid blue color.

Meet La Luz Pottery's historian, Pete Eidenbach. Facing page: A garden pot is posed at the factory's kiln.

All Rowland G. Hazard III wanted to do *was dry out, get away from East Coast business pressures, and escape the scorn of his blue-blooded Rhode Island family.*

It never occurred to him that he might reinvent himself as the hand-thrown pottery magnate of New Mexico. Take a long drive to California—that was pretty much the best idea he had. He'd already tried therapy with Carl Jung in Europe and hadn't yet met the group of men who would inspire the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous. That explains why he was on the road, but nothing explains how he got so far off a reasonably reliable east-west route that his car broke down in La Luz, then a town of barely 140 people in the foothills of the Sacramento Mountains, between Cloudcroft and Alamogordo.

He booked a room in La Luz Lodge while waiting for parts, and something about the place infected him. He couldn't kick it even after a mechanic sent him on his way. The next year, 1929, he went back. With a compulsion that, perhaps, replaced his martini glass, he began buying land. And buildings. And more land. A farm. A ranch. Water rights. Even La Luz Lodge. He mapped out construction plans that required roofing tiles similar to those he'd seen in California Mission-style buildings. He found favorable-

clays around La Luz, and he remembered those three Rodriguez brothers back in California. They knew a thing or two about turning pots.

So they struck a deal: He'd bankroll a factory for them in La Jolla, California, and they'd work every summer at the one he was building in La Luz.

What happened after that blends obsession, craftsmanship, fate, mystery, tragedy, and the flat-out weird. Left behind are some hard-to-find pots and the haunting ruins of one man's beautiful but brief grasp at salvation.

ONE LEGEND HOLDS that the village of La Luz ("the Light") got its name from the lamps its first residents, in 1866, lit every evening to assure their families in Tularosa, some seven miles away, that they were safe from Apaches, bears, and mountain lions. Other legends credit 18th-century Franciscans. Or a spooky light that bobbed ahead of travelers. Joe Lewandowski explains all this while driving me through the original village, where the rippling curves of terra-cotta tiles grace nearly every roof.

Those competing namesakes are the least of his yarns. A volunteer with the Tularosa Basin Historical Society, Lewandowski details what it took to renovate Alamogordo's old Plaza Bar for its museum and restore enough of La Luz Pottery's ruins up in Fresno Canyon, just beyond the village of La Luz, to make it a tourist attraction. Here's where it gets weird: A solid-waste consultant, he's also the



The pottery ruins sit amid scrub-covered hills. Facing page: Eidenbach takes visitors through the property, best known for its tile-clad chimney.



guy who dug up the fabled Atari video-game cartridges from the local dump in 2014. That bit of computer-geek folklore fueled the movie *Atari: Game Over*, but the key point for our purposes is that Lewandowski sold a bunch of the games for \$108,000 and donated some of the proceeds to the historical society.

The cash came in handy once the society's leaders got serious about La Luz. Its former owner gave them its eight structures and 235 acres in 2012, on the condition that they preserve it. Time had not been kind to the compound, most especially the adobe buildings. The property's most notable feature is a 20-foot-tall clay-tiled chimney that once blew off smoke from the downdraft kiln. In its day, La Luz Pottery churned out anywhere from 80 to nearly 200 varieties of pottery a year—vases, serving dishes, ashtrays, garden pots, birdbaths, lamps, but most especially roof and floor tiles. A June 1931 firing alone produced nearly 16,000 roof tiles and 140 pottery items designed by the Rodriguez brothers. Glazes derived from copper, cobalt, iron, manganese, nickel, chrome, and uranium alchemized into murky purples, deep greens, rich blues, and a muted yellow. Finished pieces were sold in 44 states and seven countries.

In the 1880s, the nation began flipping for American art pottery, with makers like Hull, McCoy, Van Briggles, and Roseville racking up admirers whose successors in recent decades have turned fanatical. Those giants focused largely on dining and decorative pieces with elegant designs and expertly painted glazes. La Luz

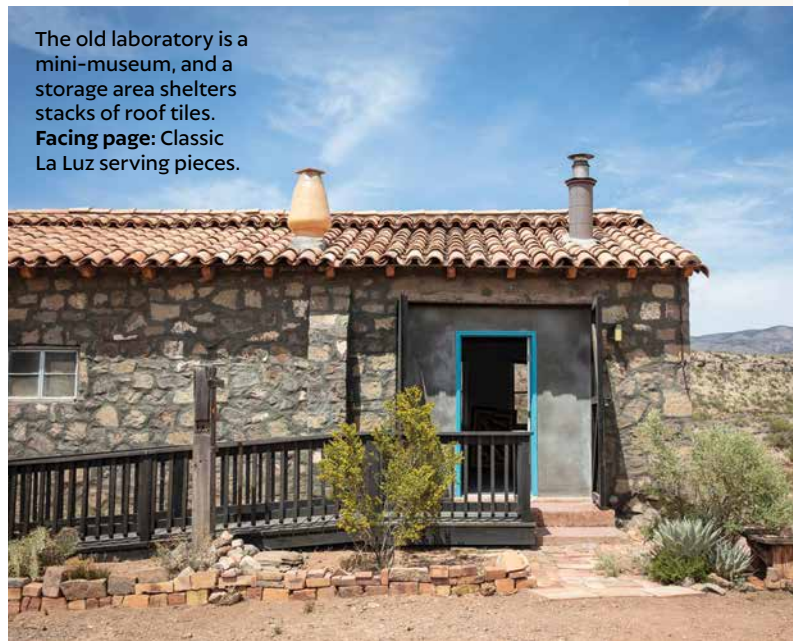
Glazes derived from copper, COBALT, IRON, MANGANESE, NICKEL, CHROME, and uranium alchemized into murky purples, DEEP GREENS, RICH BLUES, AND A MUTED YELLOW. Finished pieces were sold in 44 states and seven countries.



Take a virtual visit to La Luz Pottery at nmmag.us/truelaluz.

never matched that production fever. Because its work was hand-thrown, it looks more rough-hewn than those brands. Mainly, though, its major output was those tiles, which won the ardor of architect John Gaw Meem, who helped enshrine Pueblo Revival style as a New Mexico archetype. You can see them at places like the Albuquerque Little Theater, Los Poblanos Historic Inn, in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, and St. Joseph's Mission Church, in Mesalero. The Tularosa Basin Historical Society Museum has a tile-topped exhibit case filled with decorative pieces. Nearly all of them came from the private collection of Rick Miller, an Alamogordo veterinarian who openly admits to his obsession.

"I found my first piece at an antique shop in Artesia," he says. "Now I've got 170 pieces. It's not easy to find—and it's getting harder."



The old laboratory is a mini-museum, and a storage area shelters stacks of roof tiles.
Facing page: Classic La Luz serving pieces.

Online auction sites sometimes feature one of the rarities, and buyers shell out serious dough. “The most I’ve spent was \$450, but I’ve seen higher,” Miller says. “Even an egg cup now goes for \$75, \$100. They sold those at the Pottery for a quarter.”

The museum scored a waist-high, unglazed garden pot large enough for a child to play genie in, thanks to a Texas realtor. He called the museum saying he needed to bulldoze a property. If they could move the pot that was on it, they could have it. Lewandowski raced down, strapped it into his pickup, and drove it all the way to Alamogordo, very slowly, one eye on the rearview mirror. “It’s probably worth \$20,000,” he says.

Here’s why you hardly ever find La Luz pottery today: Even though Hazard kept the place humming during the Depression, his demons had a flair for finding him. For a while, one of his brothers ran the place, probably when Hazard was back East trying to pull his friend Ebby Thacher out of a major bender and hooking up with the sobriety-seeking Oxford Group. That episode was later chronicled in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the “Big Book” that Bill Wilson, Thacher’s onetime drinking buddy, wrote to guide people in despair through 12 lifesaving steps.

Hazard himself apparently never found the ultimate cure. Accounts vary, but most say he succumbed to subsequent binges or lost time to an overworked liver. Either way, the halcyon days faded fast. In 1945, Hazard died in Connecticut, just 64 years old. The factory changed hands a few times and pumped out more roofing tiles. In 1955, it fired a final batch. The kiln went cold. But the desire to obtain those pieces of the past continued to smolder.

LEWANDOWSKI STOPS HIS CAR and gets out to unlock the big gate that keeps the factory ruins safe from interlopers. NMSU Alamogordo history professor Pete Eidenbach leads tours twice a month, as weather permits, through the Tularosa Basin Historical Society. Volunteers show up at other times. They’ve stabilized the most endangered buildings and renovated a few others to serve as a visitor center, a mini-museum, and perhaps a one-day artist’s residence. Lewandowski says that’s phase one. Phases two and three include pottery workshops, meditation retreats, and a nature walk.

He leads me through the finished buildings, including the old laboratory (now the mini-museum), where antique bottles with old-timey labels still hold chemicals for glazes that will never gleam. We scabble around the smokestack, peer into the 12-by-12-foot kiln, and wade through weeds nearly hiding a rusting car. Lewandowski waves his hand at the empty acres on either side of La Luz Creek and describes its former self-contained village—clay mines, houses, gas pumps, a commissary, the blacksmith shop. After it closed, hippies moved in. On one hilltop, they left a rock labyrinth in the shape of a thunderbird. Nearby, their series of upright lumber slabs seem to signify something. Lewandowski calls it “the Stonehenge of La Luz,” but he can’t get it to line up with a celestial event. “Maybe you’ve got to have the right pills or be smoking the right stuff,” he says with a chuckle.

Beyond the farthest hill, upscale houses have crept up and down La Luz Canyon. But a peaceful silence has made itself at home amid this ghost of a factory town, where one man hoped to replace his damnable cravings with something more practical.

During his tours, Eidenbach says, he tells the story of the factory and its products, but also of Hazard, to whom he can trace a family tie. Each tour takes an hour or two, and visitors get to pop into the lab building, showroom, kiln, and bunkhouse. They take a lot of pictures, he says. Why does that particular pottery fascinate them so? What drives their obsession? Eidenbach isn’t sure.



LOOK FOR THE LABEL

Genuine pieces of La Luz pottery carry distinctive marks on the bottom. Look for back-to-back capital Ls topped by a flame to resemble a candlestick. The words “La Luz Trademark” and a model number appear along with it, or sometimes in place of it.

Some years back, he says, his mother snapped up three pieces of La Luz at a garage sale. He appreciates them, but maybe not as much as other collectors around the world, the ones who lurk on websites and at antique stores, yearning for just one more piece. It’s different for Eidenbach. He has something else to treasure: the 12 steps that helped him crawl out from underneath his own bottle decades ago. For that he credits a touch of fate and his link to a pottery magnate he never met. “I tend to think my ancestor helped save my life 30 years ago.” Speaking only for himself, he says, that may be the finest of all the things Rowland G. Hazard III ever crafted. **nm**

Managing editor Kate Nelson adores the three Roseville vases that her mother scored at a long-ago rummage sale for one dollar apiece. She left the handwritten prices on their bottoms to prove it.

FIRED UP

The **Tularosa Basin Historical Society** organizes tours of La Luz Pottery two Saturdays a month, by donation. Special tours can be arranged. The society’s museum in downtown Alamogordo provides a good background on the pottery, as well as Otero County’s other claims to fame, including nearby White Sands, the railroad, Franciscan missions, the School for the Visually Impaired, and native sons like World War II cartoonist Bill Mauldin. Admission is \$3 (1004 N. White Sands Blvd., 575-434-4438, alamogordohistory.com).

Nuckleweed Place is a culinary gem tucked into a trailer in La Luz Canyon. Open for dinner Thursday and Friday and breakfast, lunch, and dinner Saturday and Sunday, its menu features salads, steaks, and over-the-top desserts (526 Laborcita Canyon Road, 575-434-0000, on Facebook).

For more tips on **Alamogordo attractions**, go to nmmag.us/alamo-fun.

Get the Picture

The Bisti Badlands' exotic terrain can overwhelm any shutterbug. Thank the photo gods for Santa Fe Photographic Workshops.

BY KATE NELSON

PHOTOS BY DOUGLAS MERRIAM



Noah Daly, of Aspen, Colorado, lines up a shot.

CAR TRUNKS CRAMMED with camera bags, tripods, and lenses, we flee Farmington before dawn, engines aimed south. Despite our haste, a

half hour later, a milky gray light filters the blackness out of an eerie expanse. The Bisti Badlands stand before us, weave around us, call to us, a promise of beauty, mystery—and intimidation. Cars swing off the highway and zoom down a dirt road, the imperative clear. The golden hour is here. Best light of the day. Move!

At the parking lot, I watch everyone else hang an array of Nikon's best cameras from their necks. We barely know one another's names, but these people can rate everyone else's skills by the caliber of their kits. Me? I'm a writer. I have a notebook, two pens, an iPhone 6, and a seven-year-old Canon point-and-shoot. I'm automatically downgraded, out of my league, and hell-bent on proving everyone wrong.

The gathering light in the Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness stirs the coals of competition. We hit a sandy trail and tuck into a slot canyon of eroded cliffsides topped far above our heads by balanced rocks that could be ... whales? Angels? Camels? Barely awake and meagerly caffeinated, we scatter, each intent on capturing the iconic image, the one snap that will earn Santa Fe Photographic Workshops bragging rights.

Hours later, slumped in our hotel's darkened conference room with laptops and a projector screen, we puzzle at the mostly lackluster images beaming back at us. One by one, we had committed the cardinal sin of landscape photography. Incapable of comprehending the mind-blowing earth forms, we had instead gone macro on the minor: a plant, a pebble.

"You missed the landscape," Douglas Merriam, our guide and mentor, says. "It is called *landscape* photography."

I stare at my shot of that sandstone whale atop a tall pillar, only now seeing how poorly framed it is, how the light feels flat, how the wowness of the moment drains into a shrug. My bravado cracks. I hate that point-and-shoot and my inability to remember the difference between an

f-stop and an ISO. The only saving grace? Those shooters with their fancy-pants equipment have some ground to cover, too. Thankfully, we have three days to reinterpret an eternity of hoodoos, dinosaur eggs, sandstone arches, lava flows, and petrified logs. We will absorb every pro tip. We *will* take better pictures. Little do we know, we will also plant a flag for the future of the photographic vision.

We drift in as strangers from Texas, Maryland, Colorado, California, and New Mexico. Our crew includes two former

military guys, one soldier, one Marine, both employed as government photogs most commonly called on to document their bosses' grip-and-grin events. Three retirees show up in serious pursuit of their photographic addictions, along with an earnest Colorado kid on the first stage of his gap year. I'm the tagalong, invited in by Doug, a frequent shooter for *New Mexico Magazine*, and Luke Montavon, who usually works in the Photographic Workshops' digital lab. (Besides ensuring we stay hydrated, he'll spend the workshop's fourth and fifth days helping the group turn their shots into gallery-quality prints.)

The tenth character in our cast, though, has to be those 45,000 acres of badlands. The Bisti (pronounced *biss-tie*) has long held a strange pull over those who love the outdoors. The fossilized and eroded remnants of a 70-million-year-old dinosaur swamp consistently astound visitors. But the Bisti's reputation bristles with apocryphal tales of lost hikers in a place with no marked trails, few maps, crummy cell service, and enough bedazzlement to disorient an Eagle Scout. A chance to learn how to navigate the place lured us here as much as the technical training.

"People love it," says Reid Callanan, who founded the workshops in 1990 and today counts 20,000 alumni. "We take you to some really cool place that you get to photograph—White Sands, the Bisti, Mexico, Cuba. You get three days in the field, some instruction, some editing, and walk away with a dozen prints."

Other offerings include single-night lectures, two-day intensives on specific skills, deep dives into topics like street photography, portraiture, and multimedia storytelling—all delivered by photographers whose very names make some shooters' knees weak: Kurt Markus, Tony O'Brien, Sam Abell, Susan Burnstine, Nevada Wier. They've even added a Santa Fe Writers Lab, taught by the likes of Pam Houston, Hampton Sides, and Natalie Goldberg.

Set near Museum Hill in the Immaculate Heart of Mary compound, which also houses Carmelite nuns, the Photographic Workshops are, Callanan says, "a magical, spirited oasis in the mountains." All skill levels are welcome, with only one caveat: Know how to use your gear, whether it's a \$9,000 Hasselblad or a \$99 point-and-shoot. User manuals exist for one reason; the Photographic Workshops for quite another.

"Photography is not just photographing things or facades, but something deeper, richer, and important," Callanan says. "One of our founding philosophies is to take people out of their home environment and put them into a photographic environment. If they can check out and truly be present to the experience, it will be much more powerful."

Deflated by our first critique, we need a dose of that transcendence. Before sunset, we drive back to the Bisti—the second of five trips over the three days. At a different trailhead, Merriam drills us into memorizing two distinctive hills, one red, one black—guideposts, should we get separated from the group. But, he warns, if we stick to the BLM-recommended wash on the way in, we'll miss the coolest formations. You *must* head for those hills. Dutifully, we veer off-trail toward the nearest bulwark of slopes and put the first batch of tips to work. Point that wide-angle lens down at a feature, then sweep it up to add the context of the larger landscape. Shoot with the sun at your side to catch the best shadows. Think about the rule of thirds—are you pulling the viewer from a corner to the center and up? Most important, be fearless.

"We're always afraid that it isn't going to turn out and we'll be a failure," he says. "That isn't the case. You won't know until

NOT SO BEASTLY

The Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness welcomes hikers of all abilities. Prep before you go, starting at nmmag.us/BLM-bisti. Take the usual precautions—layered clothing, sunscreen, head protection, plenty of water, and food. There are no restrooms or potable water. Primitive camping is allowed. From Farmington, follow NM 391 south for about 36 miles to Road 7297. Head east for about 2 miles to the first parking area; another lies just beyond it. Wander at will, but pay close attention to your surroundings.

Rock forms, early-morning light, and a stormy sky conjure psychedelic effects.



you take the photo. We have to make bad images to know what the good stuff looks like. Get out of your comfort zone.”

Carole Scurlock, a retired graphics-and-web pro from Pasadena, frets that the sky, while a brilliant blue, bears not even one interesting cloud. Merriam advises her to devote more of each frame to the landscape. Scurlock soon proves to possess an artist’s touch, imparting a sense of emotional connection to sinuous hillsides and moonscape rocks. “I love to compose,” she says. “And the Bisti is like love at first sight. I’m learning from sharing and seeing other people’s work. There’s so many different points of view here.”

Unburdened by a bounty of equipment, I scamper up and down hills, giddy at how the landscape reinvents itself in cathedral-like canyons and a horizon so distant it shows the curve of the earth. Bands of red, olive, vanilla, and black appear. Textures range from speckled to lumpy, rounded, and sheer. It’s as if someone told Dr. Seuss to craft a topography, no buildings allowed. All of which is terrific until I realize I’m stranded atop a cliff with no route down. Just moments before, I could at least spy another photographer a hill or two away. Poof! Everyone’s gone. Am I to become the next lost hiker? Biting back panic, I retreat, inspect a few other cringe-worthy jump-off points, and finally locate a slide I can negotiate—gracelessly—using two hands, two feet, and one butt. Thankfully, no one is there to take a picture.

We drive to the Bisti twice a day: before sunrise, before sunset. There and back, there and back, while everyone else yammers about drones, gimbals, chesties, XQDs, XMPs, and DNGs. We download photos, crop them, nudge their contrast, overly criticize ourselves, and, just when one of us is ready to delete a batch, Merriam walks past and sees something he likes. “Wai-wai-wait,” he says to Clay Beach, the former Marine, who lives in Kempner, Texas, and works for Fort Hood. Merriam kneels beside him and recommends a range of simple alterations, including turning the color image into a black-and-white marvel that stuns the rest of us into decolorizing most of our shots, too. Even Merriam is

impressed. He’s been shooting the area for years, always in color. “That’s totally changed how I see the Bisti,” he says.

During one day’s critique, Beach admits he shot 178 images and will likely delete most of them. Everyone but Merriam laughs. “Oh, me, too,” he says. “A lot are redundant or they just didn’t turn out.” His dictum is to shoot as many as you can. “It’s all digital now; you’re not wasting film.” So we’ll erase most of our shots, or at least not post them to whatever insta-snap site we prefer. The problem, as Callanan sees it, lies with the billions of people around the globe who took an estimated 1.2 trillion photos last year. Plenty of them are poorly shot and over- or underprocessed but, thanks to the web, relentlessly deliver a kaleidoscope of two-second visual storytelling.

“It definitely is messing with our sense of what makes a good photograph,” he says. “The technology’s gotten so good that you just have to push a button and it’s technically a good photo. It’s in focus, it’s in color, there’s good resolution. But is it expressive, well composed, and thoughtful? In order to make pictures that are compelling and memorable, there’s more than point and shoot.”

The Photographic Workshops agitates against mundane imagery through its various trainings, then aims to secure a visual legacy in its digital print lab. Photos that stay in a camera suffocate. Photos that live on walls or in books can last 100 years or longer.

The Bisti landscape accommodates that goal on our final shooting day. A storm threatens from the southwest. Towering clouds, a palette of sky colors, and even some lightning jazz everyone’s morning. We go to a familiar spot, but soon dive deeper than we’ve been before. Here we find the magical dinosaur eggs (giant-tortoise-size rocks that, alas, never held prehistoric life forms), intact logs of petrified wood, and a maze of canyons that keep drawing me farther from the group. At one point, I halt, startled at the absolute silence. No planes, no birds, no voices, not even a shutter’s



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Clockwise from top left: Posing with their favorite prints are Carole Scurlock, of Pasadena, California; Noah Daly, of Aspen, Colorado; David Schroeder, of Modesto, California; and Anna Wilson, of Durango, Colorado.



TAKE A SHOT

The winter/spring schedule at the Santa Fe Photographic Workshops bursts with opportunities to sharpen your skills. Courses include flower photography, encaustic and book arts, lighting, editing, printmaking, and "iPhone Artistry." Learn more at santafe-workshops.com. The Santa Fe Photographic Workshops help sponsor *New Mexico Magazine's* annual photo contest.



click. I feel eons passing in a realm of spiritual wonder.

The rain finally catches up, making for a muddy slog back to the cars. But that afternoon's critique reveals a growth curve like no other. Image after image glows on the screen—tangible elements, sprawling earth and sky, a painter's delicate touch. Merriam tags ones he thinks will make the best prints back in Santa Fe. David Schroeder, a retired clinical psychologist from Modesto, California, who's attended a handful of the workshops over the years, shows one image first in color, then black-and-white. It's a softly lit butte against a foreboding sky. Both are beautiful, but the black-and-white version carries me to a contemplative place, one that's not entirely comfortable, yet irresistibly inspiring. "You have a great eye for looking at light, the way it hits things," says Mitch Miller, an army veteran who works for the federal Housing and Urban Development Department.

The few photos I'm willing to show are just okay to me, but good enough to Merriam that he posts one next to a similar shot of his and asks the group to tell the difference. It delivers a moment's pleasure, but overall, I'm floored by everyone else's work. So I ask: Did they see those gems as they were shooting or only when they got to editing? The answers differ, but the passion for the work—and this landscape—soars.

"I see the potential," Scurlock says of the view through her camera.

"It's like getting a flash of insight," Miller says. "It's something you feel."

"For me," Merriam says, "it's usually getting a nice surprise later."

"That's something Doug taught me," Beach says. "Before, when I would look at something, I'd think: That doesn't really look like a picture. Doug taught me to just take it and see later. I've learned some great techniques about editing and prepping my photos. I'm coming back to the Bisti—and I'm bringing a tent and an air mattress."

"I'll meet you here," Merriam says. "And I'll bring my drone." ■

Interim editor in chief **Kate Nelson** now browses want ads for used camera equipment.

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MOLTEN BEAUTY

Tucumcari's Mesalands Community College turns 6,000 pounds of iron into the hottest ticket in town.

BY *KATE NELSON*

PHOTOS BY *MINESH BACRANIA*



THREE KETTLE-LIKE furnaces chug and hiss, hungry for their first loads of busted-up iron. Ceremonial marshmallow Peeps tied to helium balloons float toward the sky. Students, artists, and onlookers stand briefly in a waft of let's-be-safe-out-there sage smoke. D'Jean Jawrunner has one last chance to bark out warnings and directions before a river of 2,800-degree molten metal turns this Tucumcari gathering into an annual circus.

"I don't care if you're big or short or whatever—if you need help with something, say it out loud," says Jawrunner, who is, it must be noted, kind of short and somewhat loud. "Don't be quiet and don't wait until the last minute. We can handle anything—if we can hear it."

Huddled in the aluminum building that houses the foundry at Mesalands Community College, she points to the master chief of ovens, the two pour captains (she's one), the shell team, the furnace team, and the water teams—people who will ferry bottles of water to everyone about to manage the high-temp transformation of heavy metal into swords, statues, and tiles. "You may not feel hot," Jawrunner says, "but

if they look at your face and shove a bottle of water in it? Drink it."

Just then, furnace master David Lobdell lopes in. "I need a mold!" he shouts. Joel Kiser, Jawrunner's fellow fine-arts faculty member and the foundry's overseer, says in his laconic drawl, "Guys, let's get to your stations."

At 2:28 p.m. on a sunny March day on the eastern plains of New Mexico, the 19th annual Big Pour blasts off. The tide of liquid neon won't stop until well after sunset. From local high schoolers to inexperienced hobbyists, veteran artists, and a few visiting art professors, this gang of about 70 people will lay hands on more than 6,000 pounds of iron, along with buckets of coal-based coke to fuel the low-tech cupola furnaces that help make this one of the largest academic foundries in the world. You can come to watch. You can enroll in a weeklong class and earn some cast-iron cred. You can pay \$20 to carve a relief image into a sand block to create a super-heavy souvenir tile. The whole shebang is one of New Mexico's best-kept secrets, but as its 20th anniversary nears, Mesalands president Thomas Newsom says, it's time to start shouting: "This is our Super Bowl of art."

Faculty member Joel Kiser chips away the plug on a furnace marked by sacrificial marshmallow Peeps.

Facing page: A furnace shoots flames into the sky.



A brilliant red, it's mesmerizingly gorgeous and deadly as can be, on its way to reemerging as something beautiful.

Still flaming, molten iron gushes into a mold.

PHOTO CREDIT GOES HERE

“**P**OUR TEAM READY,” Jawrunner yells on the patio behind the foundry’s aluminum building. A team appears with a bucket centered on a long pole. They hold it ready while Lobdell knocks a clay plug from the furnace’s bottom to release a gush of the most common element on Earth: *ferrum*, chemical symbol Fe, iron, the product of fusion high in the heavens, the cause of rich and ruddy layers of rock, the roiling core within our planet, the stuff that turns our blood red. Foundry fans, including a national network of I-40 truckers, help the school amass a year’s worth of old radiators, bathtubs, and skillets. Broken into half-dollar-size chunks by anyone strong enough to swing a sledgehammer, the iron melts into the radiant waterfall now surging into the bucket. A brilliant red, it’s mesmerizingly gorgeous and deadly as can be, on its way to reemerging as something beautiful, something useful, or, when a mold fails, something that can break a person’s heart. The team shuffles its 100-pound payload to a series of ceramic molds, hesitates, then braces while twisting the pole, tipping the bucket, releasing a messy dribble.

“HIGHER, HIGHER,” Jawrunner hollers. “KEEP MOVING, KEEP MOVING, KEEP MOVING. GOT IT! STOP.”

First mold filled, a tail’s end of flame licking off its top, the team shuffles to the next. “GENTLY, GENTLY, GENTLY, GENTLY. GOOD JOB! NICE EYE!”

Courtney Ford, the other pour captain and an artist from Lubbock, shouts “POUR” at a second team as another furnace’s belly fills with lava. Yet another team mans a kiln the size of a walk-in closet. Ceramic molds for 3-D pieces firm up within it, ready to replace the poured molds and get their own shots of iron. Between the patio and a set of backyard bleachers, wooden pallets support at least 100 of the sand blocks. Pour teams hustle between those and the sculpture molds. Heat waves shimmy off the patio floor. Other crews toss more coke and iron into the ovens. Like fireworks, the furnaces shoot plumes of sparks 10 feet into the air. Orange smoke billows out. People cough. The smoke alarm erupts.

Sue Melton, a ceramist from Dallas, came with her sculptor husband to try embedding a piece of delicate lace from her mother’s collection into a sand block—an iffy experiment, she readily admits. The pandemonium has driven her to a back corner, where she watches and muses. “All these experienced people have been very interested in my lace,” she says. “It’s just the nicest group of people to spend a week with.”



By 5 p.m., about half the tiles are poured, but the work, the heat, the weight, and the noise have taken a toll. Nearly everyone is garbed in some version of firefighter pants and jackets (Ford wears fringed cowboy chaps), plus heavy gloves sealed to their wrists with duct tape—clothing better suited for a cold snap than a conflagration. A few overheated volunteers find folding chairs and sit, forearms on their knees, eyes focused blankly on the ground, bottles of water drooping downward. But molten iron waits for no one. “HEY, GUYS, POUR!”

Straddling I-40, Tucumcari (pop. 4,975) is best known for its kitsch-centric motels and Route 66 nostalgia. But there’s more. Dinosaurs, for one. Nearby soil regularly yields evidence of Cretaceous sharks, ferns, figs, and crocodiles. Mesalands’ Dinosaur Museum presents a menagerie of them and others from around the world, cast in bronze right there, by foundry students. A broad wind-energy program attracts some of the school’s 1,000 students, as does a top-notch collegiate rodeo team.

The fine-arts program owes its soul to the area’s ranching roots. Founded in 1979 as a vocational school, Mesalands offered farrier classes, teaching

students to shoe horses and craft horse bits. “In a way,” President Newsom says, “bronzing is the same as working on the ranch, so it’s really at the heart of what we do. The flip side is that New Mexico is an artistic state, and this supports that as one of the best learning foundries around. Some of our students have gone on to being amazing artists.”

Patrick Garley was one; he now operates Arctic Fires Bronze, in Palmer, Alaska, where he and his fellow foundry alumni occasionally gather for big pours of their own. Jawrunner and Kiser are both artists as well as teachers and rely on the Mesalands foundry for pouring their works of aluminum, bronze, and iron. Lobdell brings his kit down from New Mexico Highlands University, in Las Vegas, New Mexico, where every other year, international artists join his Iron Tribe for a Chinese-style performance pour, throwing molten iron at a wall. (The next one will likely take place in March 2019.)

At Mesalands’ Big Pour, a rotating potluck of carb-laden dishes—sandwiches, pastas, cookies, and cake—fuels the crew during the long day, just one sign of how the community cares for its own. “There’s a lot of everyone chipping in here,” Jawrunner says. “The first year, I forgot to buy banding to wrap around the molds. Oh, no! It was bad. Forty-five minutes later,

someone showed up with a bucket of banding. Someone had called someone, who had called him. It’s hard not to stay involved in a town like this. You can’t let people down.”

She almost let them down early in the Big Pour’s history. A student who raised homing pigeons had, the year before, kicked off the event by releasing a triumphant flight of the birds. Everyone loved it and wanted to make it a regular event. But when it came time, the student said the pigeons weren’t ready. “Evidently,” Jawrunner says, “pigeons must practice.” So she ran to the store and bought marshmallow Peeps and a few helium balloons, and the “Tradition of the Sacrificial Peeps” was born—along with a side tradition of hiding them. For a full year, Jawrunner and Kiser will find them stashed in drawers, stuck under tables, and tucked onto high shelves, aged into an unappetizing solid.

Half of every year’s participants know these traditions, thanks to a devotion that draws them back. Locals expect them and often accost Jawrunner if a favorite visitor doesn’t pop into Del’s Restaurant or book a night at the Blue Swallow Motel. Mark Hilliard, an art teacher at Wayland Baptist University, in Plano, Texas, cites the camaraderie as part of the appeal, but also the chance to give his students

foundry skills, and the plain old economy of the week’s \$394 tuition. “For full access to a foundry?” he says. “They’re giving it away. To have my piece custom-cast at a foundry would be \$1,000 at least, and I’m doing five pieces here.”

Thanks to all that veteran assistance, the program claims an exemplary safety record—“but for a couple of Band-Aids,” Kiser says. That’s how high school senior Ashle Brown can play second chair to Texas artist Charlotte Kimball, who oversees how much coke and iron to throw into one furnace. She and all the other mother hens maintain their attention as the hours plow past and the pours build up. A cool evening breeze blows in and, as the sun sinks, the visual effect—somewhere between a campfire and a Fourth of July extravaganza—turns spectacular. Even with their hands encased in safety leathers, students pull out smartphones to capture it.

Out back, the moon casts a pale light on the tile blocks, some still glowing red. Lobdell shuts his furnace down. A little after 7 p.m., the other two blink out, their last spits of slag doused into slurry. A few people head to their motels, but most ignore the exhaustion and crowd into the Tucumcari Elks Club. There, they dance until management kicks them out at 1:30 a.m.

A set of sculpture molds, or investments, sit in a sand-filled trough while the teams await the next ration of iron.

Clockwise from right: D’Jean Jawrunner; her fellow pour captain Courtney Ford, with Robert Wedepohl; Anthony Guntren (left) and Nathan Eyring; and Ryan Collins. Facing page, from top: Workers prepare molds for the next pour. Finished products range from dinosaur parts to Joel Kiser’s sculptures, inspired by pop culture.



The next day, Jawrunner far more quietly oversees a morning-after breakfast buffet in the foundry’s kitchen. Kimball peers into a sack of pancake mix and concludes there’s enough left to feed a small family. “Except,” she says, “we’re not a small family.” Out back, artists pick through the cooled molds, hunting down their creations. Of the 38 steps involved in crafting one iron sculpture, a few more await—breaking them out of their molds, sawing off errant bits, buffing them, adding a patina. Some people throw their pieces, molds and all, into truck beds and start the long drive home. Others take on the first tasks here.

“We’re bound to find some defects,” says Albuquerque artist George Salas as he examines his pieces, including an experimental logo. “Look: One worked, one didn’t. I goofed. I’ll grind it off. Any goof in the art

world is an opportunity to seek a solution.”

Chances are he’ll return this March, when Jawrunner and Kiser solve a years-long space problem by moving into a newly renovated building with a covered patio so large and so well lit that “you expect an orchestra to break into the ‘Hallelujah’ Chorus when you walk out,” Jawrunner says. She hopes an army of past participants will join her and Kiser, their students, and the drop-ins. For those who can’t come, the college will webcast the whole week. “This event is important to our survival,” Jawrunner says as the bacon sizzles. “We’re a small school. There has to be a reason to make us a destination. These people here? They’re rock stars.”

Interim editor in chief **Kate Nelson** loves finding New Mexico’s artistic spirit in off-the-beaten-path places.

FROM IDEA TO IRON

Most of the participants in Mesalands Community College’s Big Pour utilize these two methods to craft their works:

Sand casting. Resin-based sand blocks, which look a bit like oversize adobe bricks, allow artists to carve relief designs on one side. You have to think backwards and with an inverted eye—the deepest parts of the design will stick out the farthest in the final product, which resembles a tile.

Lost-wax casting. Methods differ, but for the simplest process, imagine sculpting an object from wax. When it’s finished, dip it into silica and then into a stucco-like substance. Allow it to dry. Place it in a kiln to harden the coating and melt the wax out. Poured iron replaces the wax and replicates the original object.

POUR IT ON

The 20th annual Big Pour at Mesalands Community College welcomes spectators from noon forward on March 9. Show up on or before March 8 and you can carve a sand block for a \$20 donation to the school’s art club. Contact Kimberly Hannah at kimberlyh@mesalands.edu for information about enrolling in this or next year’s weeklong course. Watch the week’s action live at mesalands.edu.

The Mesalands website also has information about the college and its campus, including the Dinosaur Museum.

Soak up the town’s other attractions while you’re there. Scope out where to stay and what to see at tucumcarinm.com.

Innovative, successful, and philanthropic, the Meow Wolf team has quickly brought young energy to Santa Fe and beyond.



Making Their Marks

A world-famous glassmaker. A way-out-there potter. A painter of dreams. Winners of the 45th annual Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts join New Mexico's most select club. **BY KATE NELSON**

Since 1974, dozens of New Mexico's best artists, authors, musicians, and philanthropists have earned the honor of calling themselves Governor's Arts Awards winners. Their ranks include Georgia O'Keeffe, Maria Martinez, Tony Hillerman, Robert Redford, George R. R. Martin, and Robert Mirabal. Most recipients can already claim a roomful of trophies and plaques, but when they hear that the governor and members of the New Mexico Arts Commission are bestowing this lifetime achievement award upon them, emotions run deep.

"It never fails to move me how excited our artists and arts contributors are to hear they've won," says Loie Fecteau, director of New Mexico Arts, the state agency that oversees the awards. "These are amazingly talented people. I always think of [Pueblo potter] Nancy Youngblood, when she won in 2004. She's received awards from all over the world, but the one she said she always wanted was the Governor's Arts Award, because she remembered being a little girl and seeing her grandmother win one."

Governor Bruce King and his wife, Alice, established the Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts to underscore the important role the arts have played throughout the state's history. Painters, weavers, sculptors, dancers, musicians, storytellers, poets, actors, playwrights, potters—and this magazine, for its nine-decade legacy—have taken home the honor. Meet the eight people and one remarkable art collective stepping into the spotlight this month.



EXCELLENCE
IN THE ARTS

Bruce Dunlap

JAZZ GUITARIST, SANTA FE

AT AGE 25, BRUCE DUNLAP LEFT THE JAZZ scene in New York City and spent the next 34 years in Santa Fe, honing his already prodigious guitar skills, teaching children, creating a jazz festival, and opening a nonprofit performing arts space. Those guitar skills are beyond special: Besides recording with the likes of Bob James, Grover Washington, and Herbie Mann, he writes compositions so beyond the capacity of regular instruments that he hires a

luthier to build ones with extra strings. His full-bodied sound can feel like rhythmic ocean waves or a hot set in a big-city jazz bar. (You can hear a sample on his website, brucedunlap.com.) "Bruce is one of the finest musicians I have ever encountered in my entire life," says actor and Santa Fe resident Alan Arkin, who has taken some of Dunlap's workshops. "I can personally attest to his unique brilliance as a musician, teacher, and passionate supporter of

artists and the arts."

Dunlap founded the Santa Fe Jazz and International Music Festival, now part of the star-studded New Mexico Jazz Festival. And he created GiG, a Santa Fe performance space designed not to make money but to build artists' skills and audiences' appreciation of them. "His feeling is that music is in the air, and you can take

"Bruce exposes us to the kind of musical experience most of us wouldn't be able to find on our own. We are profoundly indebted to him."

—COMPOSER AND PIANIST DAVE CRUSIN

as much or as little of it as you wish," says Stuart Ashman, executive director of the Center for Contemporary Arts, in Santa Fe. "He recognizes that everyone has some measure of musical talent that can and should be expressed."

WHAT'S NEXT: "Music and musicians wilt without a respectful context to shine in, and communities thrive with art at the center. We will be expanding both our musical and educational programming in the coming months. And we are keeping an eye out for a slightly larger venue to move to."

SAY CHEERS

One of every year's most moving ceremonies, the **2018 Governor's Arts Awards** will take the stage at a free event September 14 at 5:15 p.m., in St. Francis Auditorium at the New Mexico Museum of Art, on the Santa Fe Plaza. Make time beforehand to attend the opening of a special exhibition of the winning artists' works, 3:30–4:30 p.m., in the Governor's Gallery at the State Capitol.

ART IN NEW MEXICO | CARLSBAD



Swinging in the Wind,
photograph on canvas by founding member of the Artist Gallery Archie Jean Buchanan



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EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS



Jody Naranjo

POTTER AND SCULPTOR, SANTA CLARA PUEBLO AND ALBUQUERQUE

HERE'S A GOOD RULE OF THUMB FOR living in New Mexico: If you meet a woman—any woman—from Santa Clara Pueblo whose last name is Naranjo, take heed. Chances are she's a painter, potter, writer, builder, historian, or all of the above. Jody Naranjo carries that family lineage with exuberant style. After beginning a pottery career at 15 by selling her works under the portal at the Palace of

the Governors, she grew into a nationally recognized innovator. She still hand-coils her pots, fires them in pits, and even uses traditional cow dung as fuel to get the black surface just right. But from there, she spins out into modern and whimsical designs etched onto surfaces of vessels that only sometimes mimic historical shapes. The rims go wavy or stair-stepped above images of smiling girls, dogs, a cartoon



moose, and motifs that carry echoes of Cherokee, Eskimo, and Celtic cultures.

"A lot of us are discovering ourselves in our art," she says.

Naranjo, who now lives in Albuquerque, has added glass and bronze pots to her clay creations. Altogether, they're so popular that her Santa Fe Indian Market booth usually sells out within hours of opening.

Joyful optimism comes through in each of Jody's pieces."

—LEROY GARCIA, OWNER, BLUE RAIN GALLERY

Last year, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, in Santa Fe, named her a Living Treasure. She donates pieces to the Institute of American Indian Arts, in Santa Fe, and regularly mentors students there. Oh, and she designs Pendleton blankets and jewelry for the QVC network, too.

WHAT'S NEXT: "I am working on a large collection of glass pots—bold colors, new designs, and very large pieces. They will be done in November for a showing at Blue Rain Gallery, in Santa Fe, and the SOFA show in Chicago. I find that pushing myself to be outside of my comfort zone is both challenging and exciting! New ideas and mediums keep the creative juices flowing. I'll never get bored from making the same thing twice."

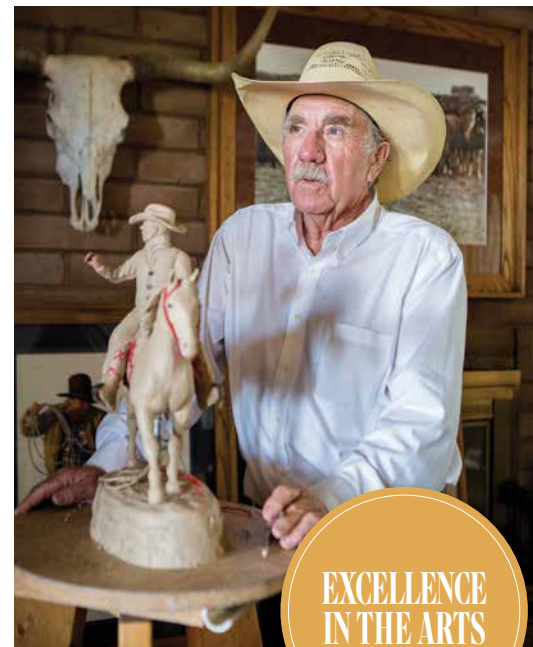
Curtis Fort

SCULPTOR, TATUM

IT'S ONE THING TO BE A COWBOY ARTIST.

It's quite another to be a cowboy artist who occasionally puts down his tools to participate in a cattle roundup. Curtis Fort earned his spurs on legendary New Mexico spreads like the Bell Ranch and the Vermejo. He still lives on his family's ranch in Tatum, down in the state's southeastern corner. And despite possessing ranch skills that other cowboys envied, he turned to sculpting in 1980, soon earning accolades, sales, a story in *Smithsonian* magazine, and collectors as far away as Germany.

"Those of us that live the cowboy way recognize his ability to get even the very smallest detail exactly right," says State Senator Pat Woods, Fort's longtime friend. His bronzes combine cowboys, Native Americans, wildlife, and landscapes to tell



EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS



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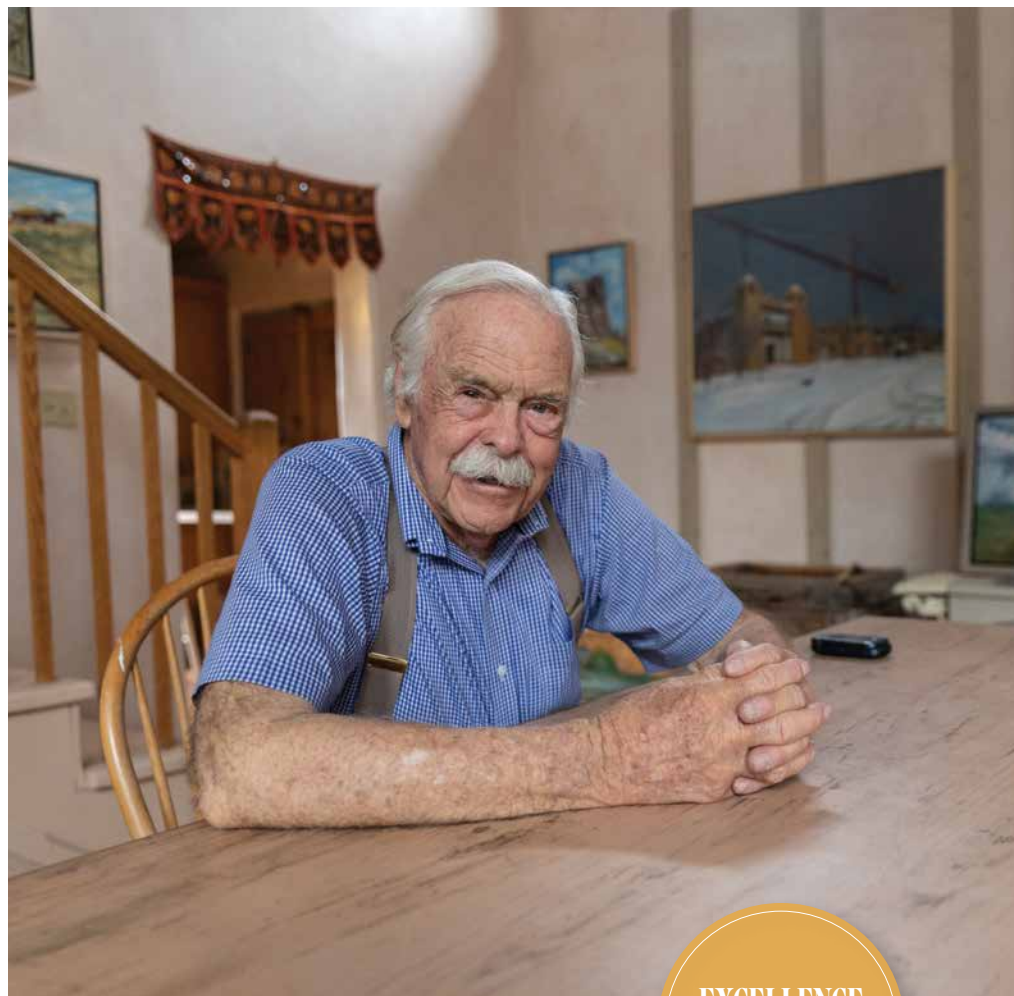
a true story of Western life and its required amounts of grit.

Like any good cowboy, Fort has also mastered the campfire tale, and he is compiling essays he wrote for the *New Mexico Stockman* into what promises to be a rollicking book. He also faithfully abides by one of the codes of the West: Help your neighbor. When someone's in trouble, he regularly whips up an artwork for auctioning off and has crafted Western-themed awards for numerous groups, including New Mexico State University, where he earned a degree not in art but in range science—and made the dean's list doing it.

“His sculptures represent our state and the West with skill, authenticity, and deep feeling.”

—AUTHOR MAX EVANS

WHAT'S NEXT: “I just installed a big piece in Hobbs' Center of Recreational Excellence—life-size quail on rocks, a wagon wheel, and other things, with water flowing through. It's a peaceful thing. I'm fixing to do a four-foot piece of a flamenco dancer for a Las Cruces collector. It's people like that, the ones who've been supportive, buying your pieces. They put you in the position to get the hang of your art. I was just gonna punch cows for life otherwise!”



Jerry West

PAINTER, CERRILLOS

EXCELLENCE
IN THE ARTS

EXAMINE ARTIST JERRY WEST'S DNA AND you'll find a history of New Mexico, from the Depression forward. Son of WPA artist Hal West, he spent his youth on a remote ranch, near Santa Fe's Japanese internment camp, and at Santa Clara Pueblo's Puye Cliffs. He carries with him the state's frontier spirit, its tangle of ethnicities, and its futuristic reach. In his paintings, he crafts his dreams in a surreal style that mimics no other artist while blending Roswell, Cerrillos, and Las Vegas, New

Mexico—a few of the places he's called home (see “Maverick Dreams,” November 2017, nmmag.us/westart). “In his paintings,” says author William deBuys, “I can hear the croak of the raven and smell the desert after a rain. I can taste the dust on the wind in the midst of drought. When I look at his work, I feel envy. I want to write with as much heart and conviction as he can paint.”

Besides designing and building houses into his eighties, West donates his time



and paintings to fund-raising efforts. Stephen Fleming, director of the Roswell Artist-in-Residence Program, remembers West as a social butterfly during his yearlong stay there in 2012. “Jerry wasn't satisfied with just sitting in his studio painting. He dove into the Roswell community, meeting and befriending a very

“Jerry West is the real deal—an authentic artist documenting New Mexico lifeways from his own experiences, without a sugar coating.”

—AUTHOR AND CURATOR JOSEPH TRAUOGOTT

wide range of individuals from every walk of life. At one point, he painted a mural in a tiny Mexican restaurant downtown. At its unveiling, mariachi musicians played and children scampered about.”

WHAT'S NEXT: “At the right time I will say a loving thank-you to all who have supported me through these many years. I'll take my plaque and place it on a dusty shelf and I'll continue my life in my prairie home and studio, helping my family, building some, traveling some, and continuing my memory/dream paintings of the world and the people I love.”

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MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE ARTS

Meow Wolf

ARTS ENTERPRISE, SANTA FE

TEN YEARS AGO, A BUNCH OF YOUNG artists in Santa Fe formed a collective to create the kind of art that couldn't fit on a gallery wall. Today, Meow Wolf is a multimillion-dollar enterprise with more than 300 employees, out-of-state expansion plans, and a top spot on everyone's list of what to do in Santa Fe. The *House of Eternal Return* exhibit upended notions of what art could be, offering a psychedelic journey into a labyrinthine family home.

You can walk through and simply marvel at it, but the installation also holds clues to a mystery that might take several visits to solve. The group's award, recognizing Meow Wolf as a major contributor to the arts, honors its impressive outreach to New Mexico schools, plus community efforts ranging from neighborhood clean-ups to collecting back-to-school knapsacks. Supported by numerous grants and legendary author George R. R. Martin,

Meow Wolf not only transformed a closed bowling alley but blew a revivalist's breath into its Siler Road neighborhood.

"Meow Wolf demonstrates that youth matters," says Tim Harman, president of the Santa Fe Gallery Association. "Young artists with a kernel of an idea can create something entirely new that is sustainable, economically successful, and boundary-blurring. Meow Wolf is at the forefront of redefining the very idea of art."

"It's not simply jobs, but jobs in arts and culture, in a city that prizes its worldwide renown for arts and culture, that make Meow Wolf stand out as unique."

—SANTA FE MAYOR ALAN WEBBER

Meow Wolf has also created an open maker space for the community and injected its pizzazz into events like the burning of Zozobra, the Navajo State Fair, and the International Folk Art Market's annual parade. As if all that weren't enough, Meow Wolf has also become one of *the* places to catch live music in Santa Fe, and also boasts a restaurant, bar, and gift shop featuring local artists. As for the future, Vince Kadlubek, Meow Wolf's co-founder and president, has big plans.

WHAT'S NEXT: "We're expanding into Denver, Las Vegas [Nevada], and additional markets, where we'll put the passion and talent that built *House of Eternal Return* to work with local artists there. We'll create exhibitions two to three times larger—the coolest things anybody has ever experienced. And we are expanding the presence of live performers in Santa Fe, our DIY Arts Fund, and community efforts here and beyond."

Photograph by GABRIELLA MARKS

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Lucy Lippard

AUTHOR, GALISTEO

MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE ARTS

IN 1966, LUCY LIPPARD CO-WROTE AN essay, “The Dematerialization of Art,” that established her as a global voice in art writing and criticism. Then a New Yorker, she pioneered a way to explain the emergence of conceptual art that helped prepare the soil for the art form to flourish. She could have played out the generally pleasant arc of art critic and curator

until retirement, but in 1994 she moved to an off-the-grid house in Galisteo, south of Santa Fe. There she began exploring the complicated intersections of art, history, geography, archaeology, culture, and politics—while continuing to curate exhibits, lecture worldwide, and harvest an armload of honors. Her 24 books include the acclaimed *The Lure of the Local* and

Down Country: The Tano of the Galisteo Basin 1250–1782.

In naming her a major contributor to the arts, the Governor’s Award cites how she supported young artists for decades, in part by purchasing their works. Some 400 of those works now belong, free and clear, to the New Mexico Museum of Art, in Santa Fe, which considers Lippard’s collection a gem. With pieces by Louise Bourgeois and Judy Chicago, it also reveals Lippard’s connection and commitment to second-wave feminism.

“Lucy is a brilliant example of a person whose life and work demonstrate the highest values of scholarship, engagement, and support for the creative sector from prehistory to the present.”

—DIANE KARP, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SANTA FE ART INSTITUTE

As a community activist, she helped develop the Santa Fe Railyard and protect the county’s open spaces and trails. What her Galisteo neighbors like best is that she’s in her 21st year of editing *El Puente de Galisteo*, the village’s monthly newsletter.

WHAT’S NEXT: “I’m finishing last-minute fact-checking and details for my 25th book, *Pueblo Chico: The Village of Galisteo, New Mexico, 1800–2018*. I’ve been working on it off and on for some 20 years, having published its predecessor, *Down Country*, in 2010. And then I hope to put a lot more energy into supporting issues of immigration, public lands, and the role of social art practice—maybe in another odd book like my last, *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics and Art in the Changing West*.”

Photographs by GABRIELLA MARKS

Dan and Ashlyn Perry

PHILANTHROPISTS, SANTA FE AND CHAMA

DAN AND ASHLYN PERRY GET AROUND.

The couple, honored as major contributors to the arts, have donated money, artworks, and leadership to the Santa Fe Opera, the Santa Fe Arts Commission, and the New Mexico Museum of Art’s planned expansion into what will be the Vladem Contemporary. They’ve created conservation easements along their Trout Stalker Ranch, in Chama, and lent a hand to Big Brothers Big Sisters



of Northern New Mexico, the Institute of American Indian Arts, SITE Santa Fe, and Silver Bullet Productions. And that's just since moving here full-time in 2011 after years of opera-laced visits.

Most of their recent work focused on the Vladem. The couple have helped lead fund-raising—including among donors in their former Texas home—for the planned gallery in the Railyard's Halpin Building. The 1930s-era warehouse has served largely as an oversize storage unit for years and needs major upgrades, along with an addition to provide more space and an architectural flourish. "Sometimes these things are more honorary positions," says

"The sheer pleasure of working with the Perrys is inspiring—and their enthusiasm inspires others to get involved as well."

—JAMIE CLEMENTS, PRESIDENT OF THE MUSEUM OF NEW MEXICO FOUNDATION

Mary Kershaw, the museum's director. "But Dan and Ashlyn have been truly active. Without their involvement, we would not be where we are in the campaign."

WHAT'S NEXT: "We hope to complete funding of the Vladem this year, so that we can break ground early in 2019 and look forward to opening in late 2020. We are focused on maintaining the pristine beauty of nature and thriving wildlife at Trout Stalker, while also giving our guests the best fishing and outdoor experiences available. That commitment extends to the nearby village of Chama, where we recently bought a restaurant property and are partnering with chef Matt Wallace to bring more great dining to the community. We also hope to partner with the village by donating academic scholarships to students."



Dale Chihuly and a Spencer Theater sculpture, *Glowing Sunset Tower* (right).

LEADERSHIP IN THE ARTS

Dale Chihuly

GLASS SCULPTOR, SEATTLE

IN 1974, LLOYD KIVA NEW HAD AN IDEA FOR Santa Fe's Institute of American Indian Arts, which he led. Glass, he thought, could become the next new medium for Native artists. His idea carried an imperative: Get Dale Chihuly. The soon-to-be-famous glass sculptor was just a young professor at the Rhode Island School of Design. New asked him to consider setting up a glass program at IAIA. The experience changed Chihuly's

art as he dabbled with Navajo blanket designs and even poured molten glass onto New Mexico landscapes to see what forms it would take. Though he eventually returned to Rhode Island and then his native Washington, his influence stayed behind. Isleta artist Tony Jojola counts him as a mentor, and Jojola's students have included Taos/Ohkay Owingeh artist Ira Lujan (see "Home Made," p. 40). The mon-

deliers hang in the dining hall of United World College, at Montezuma Castle, near Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Since his 1970s stint, Chihuly has continued to support IAIA's annual scholarship dinner and auction. He returns to Santa Fe this month to accept a Leadership in the Arts Award. The rare honor was last given in 2010, to actor, producer, and activist Robert Redford.

WHAT'S NEXT: "The Groninger Museum, in the Netherlands, invited me to create an exhibition to open in December, so I am focused on developing the exhibition design. In my Seattle studio I continue to work on new ideas for my artwork; I am always thinking about new creative projects and ways to innovate. That means looking for inspiration to develop new series, and



sometimes revisiting earlier series to develop them further." **NM**

Managing Editor **Kate Nelson** says the annual event for the Governor's Arts Awards makes her cry, laugh, and applaud with gusto.



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"His installation of glass pieces in a natural setting stimulated my mind and how I look at nature."

—NAVAJO ARTIST FROSLEY FOWLER

CHIHULY STUDIO

umental sculptures Chihuly eventually crafted bedeck the Spencer Theater for the Performing Arts, near Ruidoso, including *Indian Paint Brushes* and *Glowing Sunset Tower*, in the lobby, and *The Persians*, on the balcony. Two elaborate Chihuly chan-