



ABOVE: ME AT THE HYDE PARK SKI RUN, SANTA FE NM IN JANUARY 2015. RIGHT: SANDRA DURAN WILSON AND MARK LICHT'S BACK PORCH IN SANTA FE.



Santa Fe art sojourn (or what I did on my holidays)

by Cheryl Hannah

New Mexico in late winter is snowy one day and sunny the next. During my recent five-week visit to Santa Fe NM, I experienced the full gamut: up to my knees in the snow at Hyde Park ski run one day, then strolling around the plaza in front of the 400 year old Palace of the Governors in a t-shirt a few days later. Why New Mexico? Well, regular visitors to Braidwood over the past ten years will know FYREGALLERY shows works on paper by a range of American artists from my contacts in California, New Mexico and New York.

After several years of poor health had

kept me at home I was finally able to travel again and headed straight back to the USA. I had a wonderful time catching up with artists, seeing galleries and generally stocking up for future shows. For those who recall our 2009 'Under New Mexico Skies' exhibition, the names of the artists AnaMaria Samaniego and Sandra Duran Wilson will be familiar.

This past February I had a great time staying with them in their studios and seeing their latest work. Watching AnaMaria etching a plate for her 2015 summer print edition was an education for me; she worked on it for up to five hours a day every day and after about 3 weeks she was still only half way through the process. Such is the dedication of a master printmaker.

Sandra was equally hard at work experimenting with new forms for her painted plexiglass forms for a solo show she is having at Lacuna Galleries in June this year. We had many discussions about how to bring their work back to Australia and finally agreed on another New Mexico show in FYREGALLERY for November 2017.

Santa Fe is home to over 500 fine art galleries. It has been a centre of modern American art-making since the early 20th century and home to the indigenous art of the Southern Pueblo Indian peoples for over 1,000 years. It is a mecca for art lovers from all over the United States and the world.

So it is very exciting for FYREGALLERY to have secured 'associate gallery' status with one of the newest fine art galleries in Santa Fe, the luminous Lacuna Galleries. Lacuna's owners, Sheryle and Olaf Moon, are Australians who have taken the plunge to live and work in Santa Fe. I was thrilled when they invited me to visit them and to be given the chance to introduce NM artists I have represented for many years into Lacuna's portfolio of exhibitors.

After a few days of visiting galleries on the famous Canyon Rd and finding exciting new ones on Lincoln Ave and in the Railway Precinct I headed out from Santa Fe to see the UNESCO world heritage site at Taos Pueblo via Poeh. Local Pueblo tribes have distinctive styles of pottery decoration and body ornamentation. The young guides at the Poeh Pueblo-owned and run gallery were delighted to show me intricacies of their particular symbols and totems, watched over by 'Harry' a reminder of the buffalo herds of old.

In Taos itself I wandered through the lanes and alleys of the old town and discovered surprising Braidwood resonances. Who would have guessed that there would be a quilt shop? It is run by the charming Jan O'Donohue serving quilters from all around the USA with local fabrics of every Western iconic image imaginable? Fifty kinds of printed cowboy boots fabric — no problem!

Dragging myself away from the textiles I continued on down legendary Kit Carson Avenue to discover a treasure trove of art glass at David Anthony Fine Art as well as a completely unexpected opportunity to see paintings by Tina Mion. Her show, 'Spectacular Death Spoons' had some of her earlier paintings on loan from other institutions so I saw her 1997 'Stop-Action Reaction, Jacqueline Kennedy, King of Hearts'. I could not suppress a yelp of glee.

Things like that seemed to happen to me almost every day my a magical New Mexico mystery tour. In the tiny town of Truchas I discovered Hand Art Fine Art Gallery that has been promoting its artists for 50 years since the owner moved there as a hippie in 1965. Oh how I wished for a bigger suitcase — he had pieces that were



NOT ENOUGH SNOW FOR LATE WINTER IN NEW MEXICO.

irresistible to me. We talked art and artists and how he had built the house-gallery room by room over the years adding new spaces to display bigger and bigger sculptures while he and his very patient wife continued to carry water to the house from an outside well. I was pleased to learn that this past Summer he had built their long anticipated bathroom because after numerous cups of coffee over several hours I was in dire need of its amenity. I left with two paintings

HARRY AT THE POEH CULTURAL CENTRE MUSEUM.



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by Carolyn Lamuniere safely stowed in the trunk (not the 'boot' by the way) having decided that I would worry about getting them home later.

Temptations continued to offer themselves at every turn but not all my holiday was spent drooling over them. There are many serious issues confronting the lives of ordinary folk in New Mexico. It is the poorest State in the Union by most economic measures so many families have sons and daughters serving in the military in order to access education and medical care for their families. It is the source of stress and heart-break to many who feel that America's recent wars have gone on too long and cost too much blood and treasure.

I went out on the weekly Friday protest with my friend Mark Licht and his colleague Ken Meyers from Veterans for Peace who, together with

several dozen others, have been protesting the waste of war standing with placards on Cerrillo Cnr every week in all weather since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. I was humbled by their commitment and inspired by the work Ken does globally to help veterans.

Affordable housing is critical for many tribal people who do not have secure access to traditional lands. Water, or more importantly the chronic lack of it, is an enormous challenge. Like all the states surrounding New Mexico it is also in chronic drought. The once mighty Rio Grande is more like a trickle at the bottom of a concrete drain as it dribbles through down town Santa Fe at the end of the historic Santa Fe Trail.

Snow falling was for me something of a novelty and pretty backdrop to my photos but for my friends and colleagues they eyed each late season snow storm with rising concern. Much more snowfall was needed to guarantee water for the coming months. Not nearly enough had fallen and the Spring thaw had already begun.

My last few days were spent saying my farewells in between frenetic last minute gallery hopping. After visiting 50 galleries and interviewing 47 gallery owners and directors in Santa Fe itself I knew that I had only scratched the surface. Nevertheless I felt satisfied that I had made the most of my time. I felt refreshed and re-invigorated.

My confidence in the direction of



WITH KEN MEYER FROM VETERANS FOR PEACE OUT ON THE WEEKLY FRIDAY PEACE PROTEST AT CERRILLO CORNER SANTA FE.

FYREGALLERY was boosted by the positive feedback I received from owners and artists along the way. Future opportunities to cooperate and collaborate with Lacuna Galleries and others in Santa Fe are tangible. My tagline that Braidwood is like the NM town of Madrid — with better buildings was warmly received by those who could see the humour (and truth) of it. Madrid NM was a gold mining town, has a history stretching back 150 years, is 60 minutes drive from Santa Fe and is now the heartland of creative art making, galleries and even the setting for a few Hollywood movies ... sound familiar? Surely we can find a way to cross-promote our galleries when we have so much in common.

My last port of call this trip was the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque where I spent a few hours being enchanted and astonished by the quality and range of the print-making this world-famous institution has achieved. I have always wanted to go there as Tamarind is known for its contribution to the growth of contemporary printmaking around the world and continues to provide professional training and creative opportunities for artists.

Stowing the two Miguel Gandert photo-lithographs I purchased from the gallery shop into my already bulging suitcase I headed to the airport for my Los Angeles flight and onwards home. It seemed a fitting end to my New Mexico sojourn. Next stop for the Ganderts was to be the wall of FYREGALLERY for URBANITE and so the show goes on.