

Museum of Friends show opening at county courthouse

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Museum of Friends

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WALSENBURG- The Museum of Friends, also known as MOF, in collaboration with the Huerfano County Courthouse and County Commissioners is planning to present a series of art exhibitions. The inaugural exhibition will open on Friday evening March 14 at 3 pm at the Huerfano County courthouse, in Walsenburg. The public is invited to attend. This first exhibition will remain on display until June 30, 2008.

The artists in the show have roots in our community and an association with the newly established Museum of Friends (MOF). MOF opened to the public on October 19, 2007 with the intention of sharing its outstanding collection of Contemporary Art with Walsenburg and visitors to the area. Newly established as a not-for-profit educational facility – plans are in process to present programming that fits the needs of our community. Brendt Berger, Co-founder of MOF, originally came to the Huerfano County to visit fellow-artist Dean Fleming. Fleming was one of the originating members of the artist community called Libre close to Gardner. Both were friends in New York and shared similar aspirations for art and community. Dean Fleming, a painter has contributed years of art making and showing his work in the area while gaining national appeal. Berger's intention by founding MOF is to support the incredible lineage of great artists who have passed through and still live in this county while continuing to leave their indelible mark.

Two such artists featured in this exhibition are Bill Thach and Jeanette Faris Thach both of whom have remarkable histories in this area and Jeanette's goes back many generations. They are the parents of our

current Mayor Edi Sheldon who has lent the work. Dave Roberts, a sculptor, printmaker and environmental activist has been instrumental in creating re-use centers throughout the state and incorporates recycled materials into his sculptures. Roberts has received awards from various national and state agencies over the last decades. Ken Schneider, a resident of La Veta and for many years, Gardner has contributed his talents both to the public art arena and to education for well over twenty years while continuing to create innovative mixed-media works and sculptures. Kenny Martinez artist in residence at the Darkwood Studio-Gallery in Walsenburg, is known for his delicate jewelry creations and views of Huerfano in pencil and paint. He has collaborated with Dean Fleming and Jason Crum on murals in Walsenburg. Kenny Martinez has been a staunch supporter of new artists moving into the community and continues to support those already established. Peggy Zehring founder of the La Veta School of the Arts has contributed 

her energies and experience to creating something very unique not far from Walsenburg. She is known for her vibrant and thought provoking abstract paintings that combine simple shapes to infer deep universal truths researched from study and travel. Joan Hanley creator of La Veta Fine Arts Gallery has exhibited her work nationally receiving many accolades and commissions. She has lived in the area for over 14 years. Ben Morea Eagle an early Walsenburg artist came here 35 years ago. Successful in the writing arena Ben Morea Eagle continues to create paintings while running a successful beading design business in town called la Chipitas. Reba Lee Savangeau an established artist well known in Denver as well as locally, reflects her love of this place in poetic landscapes and city views of Walsenburg. Jim Fowler noted sculptor and painter also early founder of Libre continues to create art and teach – inspiring a new generation of artists. Jim Robieson established designer and builder was originally from Minnesota and settled here over 35 years ago, to concentrate on creating art. Robieson is known for his

 paintings and sculptures. Painter Jason Crum, a friend of both Brendt Berger and Dean Fleming and visitor to Libre since inception lived and practiced in Los Angeles in the last years of his life and returned to La Veta where he passed away, a few years ago. He was co-founder of the extraordinary NYC organization, City Walls in 1967, whose mission was to take art out of the gallery and present it directly to the people in the form of giant wall murals on buildings though out the city. Jason Crum painted the “Welcome To Walsenburg” signs that you see when entering the city. Kathy W. Hill shows her work in many venues throughout this area, and offers classes in her La Veta studio. Hill’s landscapes offer the viewer a delicate appreciation of beauty.

Some recent arrivals to the area are Maria Cocchiarelli-Berger, also Co-Founder of MOF, visual artist and public artist. The works on view in the Court House are two artists’ proofs from a public art project in the Bronx, “World Atlas, Banners” called “Sites – Public Art for Public Schools”. The originals (6 in total) hang in Public School ECC1, since 1993 and communicate the need for the acceptance of differences in the school setting. Beth Harper, multi-media artist and photographer has been a member of the energetic staff of the Spanish Peaks Library System since 2004. Currently, she works with Brendt and Maria Berger as the first MOF college intern gaining undergraduate credit for her work through Goddard College in Plainfield,



Vermont. Paul Alhadeff, a member of the Walsenburg City Council is a noted photographer and instructor of graphic arts at Trinidad Junior College. His studio is in Pueblo where he offers professional photography services.

The talent represented in this first Huerfano County Courthouse exhibition communicates hope for our community. Establishing positive activities for our youth and community to participate in will open doors previously kept closed. Art in its best form can facilitate the viewer to discover the wonder and beauty hidden in our untold potential. Through this collaboration between the Huerfano County Court House and the Museum of Friends it is our hope to bring enjoyment, and thought-provoking exhibitions that highlight all that is unique in this special part of the world.

Brendt Berger, curator of this exhibition has included “Mountain,” an acrylic painting on canvas, states that “the Court House project is an extension of the educational mission of the Museum of Friends – it is my intention that this inaugural exhibition presents a window to some of the exceptional talent in our community, past and present while highlighting the extraordinary relationship possible between the Huerfano County Governmental agencies and the new Contemporary Art Museum in Walsenburg – MOF.”

This collaboration is made possible by the support of the County Commissioners: Roger Cain, Art Bobian, Scott King, and of course – the generous support of the artists involved without whom this exhibition would not be possible. We would also like to thank Mayor Edi Sheldon, Angus Crum and Peggy Zehring for their generous loans to this exhibition.