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Small works, big ideas blossoming at MRM

Teresa Dovalpage Feb 4, 2016



Courtesy Millicent Rogers Museum

Micaceous clay bowl, one of the featured items at the Miniatures Show and Sale.

For 14 years, the Millicent Rogers Museum has held its annual Miniatures Show and Sale. “The show started as a thank-you event to our local artists for their amazing contributions to the community,” said Kathleen Michaels, museum office manager and webmaster. “It has become a tradition and a true celebration of the arts in Taos County.”

The opening reception will take place Friday (Feb. 5) from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

Browsing through the items that will soon be on display feels like opening a treasure chest. There is a sterling silver necklace, “Lily Cups,” by Taos Pueblo award-winning designer Patricia Michaels; a cast iron sculpture by Kim Henkel; an assortment of jewelry by David B. Anderson, the Dukepoo family and other artists; as well as paintings, pottery, wearables, figurines and much more.



“This year, we have 162 participating artists,” Michaels said. “I would say that there are two things that make this show unique: the high quality of the artwork and the fact that it is so small and, in many cases, extremely detailed — all the pieces are 100 square inches or smaller.

“Now, remember that after the opening night, the items will remain on display from Feb. 6 to March 6,” said Michaels. “Taos County residents with ID can come in for free and enjoy them.”

There will be People’s Choice “Best of Show” awards for three categories: two-dimensional artwork (paintings, photos and drawings), three-dimensional artwork (sculpture, pottery and multimedia) and jewelry. During the opening night, attendees may fill out a form and deposit it into a ballot box located in the gallery.

Another award is the “Board of Trustees Best of Show,” which covers all categories. “In total, four ribbons will be awarded,” Michaels said. “So don’t miss the opportunity to come and support your favorite local artists.”

Tickets are \$20, \$15 for museum members. They can be purchased at the museum store or through its website at millicentrogers.org.

New director, big plans

The newly hired executive director of the Millicent Rogers Museum, Caroline Jean Fernald, chose a small, cozy room as her office. The room is “in the middle of action” — close to the collections, visitors and the museum store. She will be at the heart of a building that houses more than 7,000 objects representing the arts and cultures of the Southwest.

Fernald is no stranger to Taos. For the past two summers, she acted as the Eanger Irving Couse and Joseph Henry Sharp Historic Site’s collections management intern and was in charge of cataloging and conserving the site’s Native American Art collection. She was also a presenter in the Virginia and Ernest Leavitt Summer Lecture Series in 2014 and 2015.



New Millicent Rogers Museum Director Caroline Jean Fernald
Courtesy Millicent Rogers Museum

“While working for the Couse-Sharp Site, I fell in love with Taos and became very familiar with the community through my involvement with the local music scene,” she said. “I sit in as a singer and fiddler in a variety of acts and have performed at the Adobe Bar, Eske’s, Black Mesa Winery, the Taos Farmers Market and several other spots around town.”

Originally from central Illinois, Fernald came to Taos from Norman, Oklahoma, where she received her master’s degree in Native American art history and is a doctoral candidate in Native American art history.

Full of enthusiasm, she talked about her vision and dreams for the future of the museum.

Q: What plans do you have in terms of new activities and events?

A: I look forward to leading the museum into promising new directions. I will be working hard to engage more with the local community. We will have many special events particularly designed for them. My background is in music, so I want to get music in the museum and integrate it into its regular life. I'd also like to work more closely with the local schools and bring the students in. We have a great responsibility: to create a culture of coming to the museums and enjoying them. I started visiting museums when I was very little, and it developed into a habit. I am very thankful to my parents for that!

Q: What are your goals for the future of the museum?



A: I want to make the Millicent Rogers Museum into a nationally recognized name, like the University of New Mexico Museum in Albuquerque or the Denver Art Museum. It has the potential to become a cultural destination, just as these places are. In that sense, having a busy activity calendar will help. I also plan to build a network with other museum directors around the country and to bring in more grant money.

Q: This year is the 60th anniversary of the Millicent Rogers Museum. How do you plan to celebrate it? Any special exhibits?

A: The theme for this year in Taos is "Visionaries," and (the museum's namesake) Millicent Rogers was, among many other things, a true visionary. So, together with The Taos Visionaries: Art and Culture Consortium, we will host an exhibition centered on the parallels between her life and work and the museum's core values. We will explore her collections, her

advocacy for the arts and also her “other life” as an heiress and a fashionista. Millicent was a fascinating woman, and letting people know more about different facets of her life will add a more personal feel to the museum.

Q: What do you like best of your new place of work?

A: The art collection is extraordinary, very diverse and representative of the area, so I feel privileged to be working with it. I am also impressed with both the staff and the volunteers. The majority of people who work here have been doing it for a long time, and they are extremely dedicated. Carmela Quinto, the curator, has been at the museum for 25 years. This is only my second day of work, but I already feel welcomed and comfortable here.

Q: Any personal message to the people of Taos?

A: I'd like to find out what people think of the museum ... what they like of it. I hear them say, “I really love this place.” What do they love? I want to build on that and to make the Millicent Rogers Taos' museum.

Millicent Rogers Museum is located at 1504 Millicent Rogers Road, off U.S. 64 west and northwest of El Prado. For more information, call (575) 758-2462 or visit millicentrogers.org.



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