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The New Mexico Fiber Arts Trails: the south side of the North Central Loop is shown in blue.

Textures & Hues of the Fiber Arts Trails— Part 1, The North Central Loop

by Vicki Gadberry



MIDDLE: Tapetes de Lana houses a weaving studio and a gallery.

BOTTOM: Alpacas, yarns, garments, classes and knitting retreats are available at Victory Ranch Alpacas in Mora, New Mexico.

The New Mexico Fiber Arts Trails were woven together through the cooperative efforts of New Mexico Arts, the state arts agency, and a grassroots network of fiber artists statewide. With a special appropriation of \$250,000 approved by the New Mexico legislature and Governor Bill Richardson, arts trails have been established in rural communities throughout the state. Supporters of the trails seek to build awareness of the state's unique and diverse fiber-arts heritage and to create viable economic opportunities for artists within local communities.

The North Central Loop of the New Mexico Fiber Arts Trails includes twenty-six fiber-related sites. Part 1 explores ten sites that are the southern portion of this loop. Comprised of galleries, studios, and a ranch where fiber-producing mammals roam the landscape, this portion of the trails provides more than ample quantities of artwork, products, and supplies, and its natural beauty is sure to please any fiber enthusiast.

At Victory Ranch Alpacas (#20) in Mora (north of Las Vegas, New Mexico, on Highway 434), knowledgeable hosts will guide visitors through every step of caring for alpacas and turning their fleeces into amazingly soft yarns. Alpacas, alpaca yarns, garments, classes, and knitting retreats are all available here.

Northwest of Las Vegas, along State Road 518 in Mora, is Tapetes de Lana (#19). Housed in a historical mercantile building that has been transformed into a thriving community center is the weaving studio and gallery where students are trained. Over 300

years of fiber traditions are reflected in products created by the students who are taught handspinning, natural dyeing, and weaving. Tapetes de Lana works with small local farms to "...achieve rural sustainability in their mill, creating high-end quality yarns," according to Director Carla Gomez.

On the northwest corner of the Plaza in downtown Las Vegas, New Mexico, is another location for Tapetes de Lana (#21) which displays and sells the work of students who have been trained through the non-profit's entrepreneurial programs.

Housed in a historical building in downtown Las Vegas, New Mexico, is Furniture and More (#22) where one corner has been transformed into a showcase for the work of fiber artists. Here, one can discover a variety of handmade treasures such as hand-spun and hand-dyed churro yarn, which has been used to create Rio Grande rugs and colcha embroidery, along with tapestries, architectural sculptures, upholstery, and domestic linens.

World-renowned tapestry artist James Koehler first learned to weave while living in a Benedictine monastery in northern New Mexico where the sale of handwoven liturgical vestments and home accessories helped to support that community. Creating tapestry allows him to focus on "...the creative, constructive process." At James Koehler Studio (#30) in Eldorado (south of Santa Fe), one will find individual instruction and classes, as well as tapestries and hand-dyed yarn for sale. His airy, open studio beckons students and customers to learn about dyeing, design, and weaving.

South of Santa Fe in the charming rural village of La Cienega, one can find the studio of fiber artist Lauren Camp (#29). She paints and dyes cotton fabric, cuts and re-sews silk clothing, and adds threadwork for color and contour in her abstract and thematic figurative pieces. Want to see where and how fiber art is created? Set up an appointment with Lauren and be guided through her artistic process in a studio where color thrives both inside and out.

The works of more than thirty New Mexico fiber artists are colorfully shown in a charming adobe building at the Tapestry Gallery in Madrid (#28). Included are handwoven chenille clothing, rag rugs, and art dolls, among others. Owner Judith Colvin, who feels "...the fiber arts trails are working" to connect fiber art lovers with the various destinations, will readily share her knowledge about the artists represented in her gallery.

According to Diana Johnson, co-owner with her husband Mel of Johnson's of Madrid Galleries of Fine & Fiber Art (#27) in Madrid, "...the word is spreading about New Mexico's fiber arts!" Along with Diana and Mel's block-printed and silk screened clothing are the works of fifty other northern New Mexico fiber artists. Housed in a huge space (a former coal truck repair garage dating back to Madrid's former life as a coal mining town before it was transformed into an art mecca), one can find "wearables and wallables" along with baskets, rugs, beadwork, and much more.

East of Albuquerque, off of Exit 187 along Old Route 66, one will find Beth Orell and Good Fibrations! (#24) in Edgewood. Beth not only raises sheep and goats, she has a huge selection of locally produced roving, yarn, and assorted fiber art tools. Seeking information on raising fiber animals? She can provide that, too.

A woman of many talents, Robin Pascal Fiber Artist and Perfect Buttons (#25) in Edgewood will provide "safe haven" and more than ample supplies for the fiber devotee. Here one can find Robin working on various textile projects or creating



TOP: Colcha embroidery by Beatrice Sandoval can be found at Furniture and More in Las Vegas, New Mexico.



MIDDLE: The Tapestry Gallery of Madrid, New Mexico, carries handwoven clothing, rag rugs, art dolls and other fine fiber art by more than thirty artists. Photograph by the Trails site.

BOTTOM: Tapestry artist James Koehler weaves, teaches and sells his hand-dyed yarns at his studio in Eldorado, south of Santa Fe.



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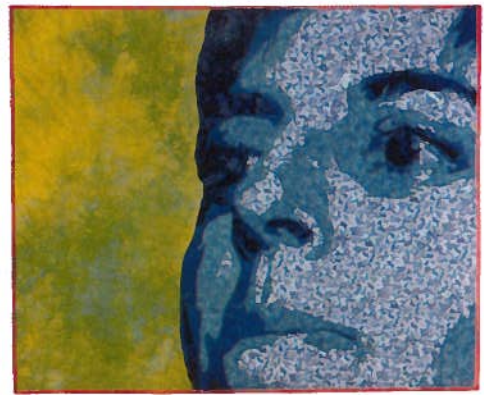
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La Cienega's Lauren Camp creates unique fiber art with paints, dyes, fabric, clothing, and thread. Photograph by the Trails site.

her fabulous one-of-a-kind fused glass buttons, as well as hand-painted yarns, roving, kits, and patterns. Knitting lessons, private weaving lessons, and one-day yarn painting workshops are also available.

The Fiber Arts Trails guide is as appealing as it is informative. Hours of operation, phone numbers, directions, and Web site addresses, as well as information on handicap accessibility, are included. New Mexico Arts also includes phone numbers and Web addresses for the New Mexico Tourism Department and the New Mexico State Police. You might want to call ahead to a specific gallery or business to confirm hours or to make an appointment, as some hours have been changed since the guide was published.

This portion of the Fiber Arts Trails offers visitors an unforgettable experience in the drama of the landscape, and the fabulous fiber art—the rich textures and hues found only in New Mexico.

Vicki Gadberry is a fiber artist and writer living in Silver City, New Mexico.

For your copy of the New Mexico Fiber Arts Trails guide or for more information, please contact New Mexico Arts, (505) 827-6490, or toll free within New Mexico, (800) 879-4278; see <www.nm-fiberarts.org> or <www.nm-arts.org>.

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