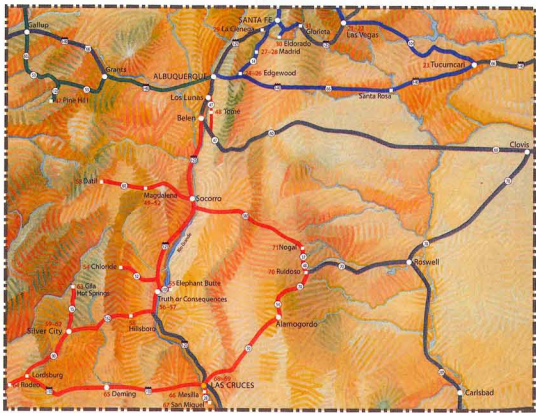


Putting Fiber Artists on the Map New Mexico's Fiber Arts Trails

by Vicki Gadberry



A map of the New Mexico Fiber Arts Trails; the southern trails are shown in red.

"Making the unknown known is the important thing." This statement was once made by the famous New Mexico resident and visual artist Georgia O'Keefe. Perhaps this thought was foremost in the mind of Governor Bill Richardson when he supported efforts by New Mexico Arts (a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs) to initiate the New Mexico Arts Trails. Intertwined with ideas of developing local economies, increasing tourism, and forming rural communities' partnerships with arts as the vehicle, this effort promotes the arts and artists of 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 Richardson, arts trails have been established in rural communities throughout the state. The many supporters for the trails seek

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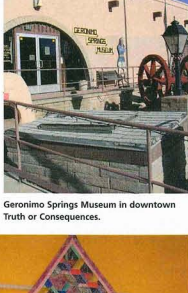
to build awareness of the state's unique and diverse fiber arts heritage as well as to create viable economic opportunities for artists within their local communities. As Governor Richardson wrote in the printed guide, "The Arts Trails are designed to put our artists on the map and bring the market to them." It is a winning proposition for both artists and travelers; artists work locally, and tourists have the good fortune to learn about and purchase original work from artists in their workplaces, along with discovering working farms, trading posts, workshops, galleries, and museums. Sites included in the first edition of the printed guide have undergone a rigorous application process and are now open and ready for visitors.

Trails are organized by region—North Central, Northwest, and South—containing the artwork of more than 250 artists at more than sixty destinations. The South trails route (see map on page 24) includes twenty-three destinations and takes visitors from Tomé, just south of Albuquerque off Interstate 25, to Socorro, then due south to Las Cruces, with numerous stops in-between, such as midway at Truth or Consequences, or Ruidoso and Nogal to the east, or west to Hillsboro and Silver City.

In Truth or Consequences, the gallery Celestial Creations (#56 on the map) boasts a large diverse collection of New Mexico-made fiber and other handcrafted items. Geronimo Springs Museum (#57 on the map) contains rich and eclectic collections of historical artifacts, archives, clothing, and a variety of assorted paraphernalia documenting local and state history.

Among the variety of studios, galleries, museums, and suppliers along this portion of the trails is the Common Thread (#59 on the map) in Silver City. The Common Thread proudly serves as one of the trails' two Fiber Network Sites; updates from trail sites, along with a supply of maps and detailed information about the trails, will always be available here. Situated in historic downtown Silver City, the gallery showcases the work of more than seventy area fiber artists. The Common Thread, which is the storefront gallery for the Southwest Women's Fiber Arts Collective members, "...distributed \$28,000 from store sales to eighty-four artists in 2007," according to Charneine Wait, past Executive Director and co-founder of the collective. "This is a great example of cultural entrepreneurship on a grassroots level which has created an inter-connectedness among fiber artists in the southwest."

Within walking distance are three more Silver City trail sites: Yada Yada Yarn (#61 on the map), any yarn lover's paradise; across the street, Thunder Creek Quilt Company (#62), a heaven for quilters and fabric collectors; and Elemental Arts (#60) on historic Yankee Street, which exhibits contemporary fiber art works. From Silver City,



Geronimo Springs Museum in downtown Truth or Consequences.



Fiber art by Rebecca Speakes at Celestial Creations in Truth or Consequences.

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Handmade jackets by Tatiana Maria Kurakian at the Common Thread in Silver City.

one can venture north, south, east, or west to find additional sites of exciting artwork, enthusiastic artists, and other wonderful adventures.

Also included in the trails guide are practical details on each site—hours of operation, phone numbers, directions, and Web site addresses, as well as information on handicap accessibility. New Mexico Arts also includes phone numbers and web addresses for the New Mexico Tourism Department, New Mexico State Police, and weather/road condition contact numbers, should it become a factor during travel time. An additional practical suggestion might be to call ahead to a specific gallery or business to confirm hours or to make an appointment, if your visit timing is outside normal hours of operation.

The New Mexico Fiber Arts Trails guide is a visual feast in itself. Lavishly photographed, with colorful and creative illustrations of each region's map, it is an appealing, introductory glimpse into the rich history of New Mexico's textile traditions and its contemporary interpretations. It is more than just an informational guide—it is an inspirational guide. Thanks to Governor Bill Richardson, New Mexico Arts, and the New



Handmade baskets by Holly Modine at Celestial Creations in Truth or Consequences.

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Mexico state legislature, the unknown is becoming known; in fact, fiber artists across the state are now on the map.


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.nmfiberarts.org> or <www.nmarts.org>.

All photographs by Vicki Gadberry.




A portion of the Mimbres pottery collection at Geronimo Springs Museum. Permission used by permission from Geronimo Springs Museum.



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