

August offers variety at EP Museum of Art

The El Paso Museum of Art is much more than its outstanding collections of paintings and sculptures, and August will provide several opportunities to experience a wider range of art and artists.

Most notably, "An American Animator, Don Bluth" will be on display in the de Wetter Gallery through Sept. 17. The 400-piece exhibition, comprised of concept sketches and drawings, animation cels, storyboards, backgrounds and publicity photographs, provides viewers with fascinating insights into Bluth's animation style and his creative process. The exhibit is offered in conjunction with the Plaza Classic Film Festival.

Born in El Paso in 1937, Bluth has distinguished himself as an animator, film director, writer and producer. His animation credits include "The Secret of NIMH," "An

American Tail," "The Land before Time," "All Dogs Go to Heaven" and "Anastasia."

As a youth Bluth was so fascinated by early animated films that he rode his horse to the local movie theater every Saturday to watch Disney classics such as Fantasia and Bambi.

"After watching the movies, I'd go home and copy every Disney comic book I could find," he confided. Bluth's family moved to Utah where Bluth graduated from high school and attended Brigham Young University for a year before getting a job with the Disney studios. He started in 1955 as an assistant to John Lounsbery in the production of "Sleeping Beauty." In 1957, only two years after being hired, Bluth left Disney to travel to Argentina on a Mormon mission.

Returning to work with Disney once again, Bluth became one of the studio's



chief animators working on films such as "The Rescuers" and "Pete's Dragon." He wasn't satisfied with the quality of work being done following Disney's death, however, so on his 42nd birthday in 1979, Bluth and nine fellow Disney animators started a new animation studio, Don Bluth Productions.

The fledgling studio's first feature-length film was "The Secret of NIMH" (1982). Bluth employed 160 animators during the production and agreed to the first profit-sharing contract in the animation industry. Though a moderate success in the box office, the movie received critical acclaim, and thanks to home VCRs became a cult favorite.

In 1983, Bluth created the video games "Dragon's Lair" and "Space Age," both of which allowed the player to control an actual cartoon.

Bluth teamed up with producer Steven Spielberg three years later for his next project, "An American Tail," which became the highest grossing non-Disney animated film at that time. The second Spielberg-Bluth collaboration, "The Land Before Time" was a success in both theaters and the home video market. In 1989, before his next film, "All Dogs go to Heaven," Bluth broke with Spielberg and was not involved in the numerous "Land Before Time" sequels.

During decade of the 1990's Bluth used his talents as a director on films such as "Rock-a Doodle," "Thumbelina," "A Troll in Central Park" and "The Pebble and the Penguin." None of which matched the success of his previous films.

The EPMA will be showing six of Bluth's animated films in the El Paso Energy Auditorium the weekends of Aug. 5-6 and Aug. 12-13. Admission is free. Schedules are available at plazaclassic.com or by calling the museum.

Those desiring to meet Bluth in person will want to sign up for an exclusive Members Only tour Aug. 12. Led by animators Bluth and Gary Goldman, it will provide with an insider's view of the process behind the creation of animated movies.

Also in August, EPMA on the Road presents two options to combine art, food and drink:

- All that Jazz! Painting Workshop is 6-7:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 3 at Ruth's Chris Steak House at The Fountains at Farah. Participants can create a painting inspired by New Orleans jazz and zydeco music, while learning the basics of composition and color combinations. Workshop is \$30 and covers all materials, a beverage, and light bites. To register, call 225-3625.

The workshop is part of the Art à La Carte monthly workshops at the East Side shopping center, each of which will be facilitated by EPMA's teaching artists. For future programs, visit elpasoartmuseum.org/events.

- A Taste of Red (Wine!) is 6 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 17, at the museum, in celebration of the exhibition "The Red That Colored the World." Led by certified sommelier Manny Jemente, the program will offer samples of the many shades and expressions of red wine. Tickets are \$20 (\$15 for EPMA members). Space is limited. To reserve a seat in advance, visit epmafoundation.org

Finally, El Paso artist and gallery owner Hal Marcus will lead a two-part master class in August. "Class level is from age 13 to adult, but previous art experience is not required," Marcus said. "I want to encourage everybody to try new ideas and just have fun."

The first session will be 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 24 at the museum. "This will be in a studio setting so I will talk a bit about my approach starting off with the importance of drawing, and then lead members into the zone where they can get in touch with their own creative spirit. This will be a learning experience for me as encouraging students not to be inhibited is a challenge in itself."

The second session begins at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 26, at the Hal Marcus Gallery, 1308 N. Oregon, for a tour of the gallery well as Hal's home and studio across from the gallery. Following a lunch break, the group will return to the museum at 1 p.m. to continue their painting projects.

Explaining this unusual format, Marcus shared, "When I agreed to teach this class, it was with the understanding that I could invite participants over to see my world. It is by experiencing an artist's environment and talking with him one on one, that students begin to understand the nuts and bolts of creativity."

The class costs \$38 (\$30 for museum members) and includes all materials. Contact the museum for more information or to register.

Myrna Zanetell is a freelance writer specializing in the visual arts.

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Art Scene

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Mesilla Valley Fine Arts Gallery — 2470-A Calle de Guadalupe in Mesilla, across from the Fountain Theatre. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. The gallery features more than 30 artists in various media. New works displayed every three months. Information: (575) 522-2933 or mesillavalleyfinearts.com. Receptions are 1 to 4 p.m. the first Saturday

of each month. August's artists are painter Frank Peacock and photographer Bob Zolto. Both artists' works reflect the natural world.

NM Watercolor Society Southern Chapter — The Chapter continues its "Nature" watercolor exhibit of southern New Mexico and El Paso watercolorists **through Aug. 31** at Southwest Environmental Center's Cottonwood Gallery, 275 N. Main, Las Cruces. Hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through

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