

# Revitalized International Museum offers full calendar of exhibits

After a period of time when the existence of the International Museum of Art seemed to hang in the balance, it is wonderful to report that the organization's future now seems secure as it continues to fulfill its mission as one of the first, and perhaps loveliest, art museums in the City of El Paso.

Thanks to the diligent efforts of Mitzi Quirarte, who took over as director four years ago, the museum is coming into its

own once again.

"At that time the former director had resigned, and it was rumored that the museum would be closing its doors," Quirarte said. "I was on a committee charged with helping to save the museum as the City of El Paso was very interested in taking over the property. It was at this point that I accepted the position as director, and from there we went forward full force."

With Quirarte, the board of the International Museum had found the perfect person to revitalize the museum. She is an accomplished artist in her own right. In addition to being a charter member of the Pastel Society, she has also established an enviable record with a variety of volunteer organizations.

"I worked with Hospice of El Paso for more than eight years, and I was the one who started the concept of doing painted chili peppers, which has become a very popular fundraiser for them. I also work with Operation Santa Claus, which helps collect toys for kids who do not have parents to provide for them.

"However, once I started with the museum that became my life," she said, laughing. "From the beginning my challenge was to renew patron support for the museum. As they saw the progress we were making, little by little people began to believe in it again. Having people interested in it is the secret to keeping it alive.

"When I took over there were a lot of physical challenges on the horizon as well, such as meeting all the maintenance items required by our contract with the city."

As one example, in May 2017 the State of Texas declared the building elevator system inoperable. Repairs to refurbish were estimated to run around \$30,000. Local artists came to the rescue by donating work to be sold at the "Elevate your Art" fundraising event. With sales from the art and other donations, Quirarte said, the repairs were completed and paid for, adding, "New landscaping is in, and all the other items are up to date."

The building at 1211 Montana has been home to the International Museum of Art for more than a decade. It was built in 1909 by leading El Paso architectural firm of Trost and Trost. Initially it was the home of State Sen. William Turney and his wife, Ina. Following his death, the building eventually became the property of the City of El Paso, which honored the Turneys' request that it would be used as a museum. It housed the El Paso Museum of Art until the museum relocated to its current site in downtown El Paso.

"The building is now more than a century old so there continue to be a lot of ongoing maintenance requirements such as updating the heating and air conditioning systems," Quirarte said. "Although the city continues to own the building, all maintenance and other expenses must be paid for by the International Museum organization."

Funds to cover these expenses come from several sources: donations, museum memberships and rental of the building for social events such as weddings, quinceañaras and art exhibitions. The museum also receives a grant from the Huthsteiner Endowment for the Fine Arts.

"We are fortunate in that we are beginning to get a full calendar," she added. "For instance, The Sunset Film Society presents movies on Saturdays. Admission is free but we make money from the concessions. We had 110 kids on a recent weekend. Additionally, this is our second



year collaborating with the El Paso Art Association to present their photography show 'Eye of the Camera.' We had an incredible turnout for the opening — about 150 people — for the opening reception. Four more outstanding exhibits are on the agenda between now and the end of 2018."

The upcoming shows include:

- **Western Art Exhibition** – The show opens Aug. 5 and hangs through Aug. 31. Artist Don Beene related that the El Paso Art Association previously hosted a Western Art Show from about 2007 to 2010. "Being here with the ranching heritage of West Texas and southern New Mexico, I am very pleased to see that the EPAA is renewing the tradition of a Western show. I feel that it could turn into a really solid annual exhibition," Beene said.

- **2018 Arts International** – The El Paso Art Association's annual juried show, the largest and oldest of its kind in the region, opens Sept. 5, with a reception Sept. 8, and will hang through Sept. 30. Mesilla-based artist Ouida Touchon will judge the exhibition. Three other artists, Ann James Massey, Joshua Rose and Isadora Stowe will jury entries.

A working artist who also teaches her craft through classes with the Doña Ana Arts Council, Touchon holds a BFA in painting from the Kansas City Art Institute and a MFA in Studio Arts from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. In addition to painting, she has taught printmaking and painting as well as mentoring a number of young artists in her local community. LuLu Press recently published her book, "Morning Paintings", which will be used in art therapy workshops taught by mental health professionals.

- **Alberto Escamilla Retrospective** — Impressionist painter Alberto Escamilla will celebrate 40 years as a professional artist with a large exhibition opening in October, which will feature past work and a number of new paintings.\*

- **Sun Bowl Exhibition** – Another of El Paso's oldest art tradition, the exhibition will be on display in December.

## Silver City destinations

If you are looking for a getaway that promises a delightful blend of history and art, consider making a trip to Silver City, New Mexico. It's an easy three-hour drive from El Paso, and its 6,000-foot elevation offers cooler days and nights.

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