



News Release

For Immediate Release

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April 2022 Art Exhibit “Fiber Matters”

Silk and wool may seem like an unusual pairing, but art centered on these two fibers will be displayed in the Doña Ana Arts Council gallery in April. Fiber artists in silk and wool and Navajo-Churro Wool production and uses will be available at several points in the month to discuss their work and processes. The artists displaying work in weaving include Patricia Dunn, Ric Rao, and Svea Peterson. Judy Licht will exhibit works with dyes on silk.

The Churro sheep brought from Spain in 1514 are considered rare today and produce high-quality wool for weaving. The Diné Bé' Iiná from Ship Rock, NM will be on site for Arts and Culture Day in Las Cruces, April 9th to provide a wealth of information on raising Churro sheep as well as displaying some of their work. Other planned activities are listed below.

Dunn shared that weaving tapestries, dyeing yarns, and creating other fiber art expressions are essential to her well-being. She is self-taught and the beneficiary of workshops offered by the Handweavers Guild of Boulder, CO, and its fiber community. She graduated from the State University of New York in Plattsburgh with a degree in Spanish Language and Literature and attended graduate school at the University of Colorado.

She and her husband, Mark, traveled to New Mexico and later México, developing a love of the cultures once a single region in the southwest of North America. They made their home for 23 years in Zacatecas, Mexico, and Patricia recently moved to Las Cruces.

"Sky is a profound presence in Zacatecas (New Mexico and Colorado too)", said Dunn. "I carry a pocket camera and take dated snapshots of close by and of far-off places that whisper, speak or shout to me in a moment. Later a snapshot will carry me into a memory of being there."

Her process includes editing the images, blind contour drawings, designing the tapestry, and drawing on a grid that becomes her weaving guide. Dunn has artwork in private, public, and corporate collections.

Licht has a degree in Art Education and a Master's in painting from New Mexico State University and a Master's in Art Therapy from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. She taught art in public schools and practiced Art Therapy in clinical and community settings. Her lifelong passion for color and feelings for the natural world inform her work and enable her to explore various silk painting techniques. Her work can be seen at the Agave Artists Cooperative Gallery in Mesilla, NM.

"From the first time I watched dye flowing from my brush onto silk, I was completely captivated by this medium," said Licht. This fascinating medium offers magical moments of dye interacting with silk, creating a single entity of color and softness."

Rao has been involved in fiber arts for more than 40 years. He started hand spinning in 1975, then experimenting with natural dyes and weaving. He started a dye garden in Las Cruces, NM, showcased on the PBS Series, "Southwest Yard & Garden" in 2002. He has conducted natural dye workshops throughout the southwest for more than 15 years, and he is a certified Yarn and Fleece Judge. His Master Spinner program at Olds College in Olds Alberta, Canada, included an in-depth study on spinning and dyeing for Colcha Embroidery. He has written an article on dyeing Cotton for Ply Magazine, Spring 2016 issue.

A life-long fiber artist, Peterson's mother taught her to knit as a young child in Stockholm, Sweden. She has mastered most aspects of the fiber arts, teaching, designing, sewing, dyeing, knitting, and felting. She spent 20 years involved in the arts in Fort Collins, CO, and she teaches workshops in Abiquiu, NM.

Not long after Peterson's recent move to Las Cruces, she hit the ground running, getting involved with the Mesilla Valley's diverse and talented art community. She joined the Mesilla Valley Weaver's Guild in 2020 and quickly immersed herself in the organization seeking opportunities to volunteer and teach weaving and felting. She felts rugs and handbags from Churro sheep wool to support the "Shave 'Em 2 Save 'Em" effort and has been deeply committed to educating the public about the Churro sheep in this area since the 16th Century.

"Svea was our recipient of the Debi True Rounds Newcomer Award in 2021 and she is the driving force behind this exhibition," said Greg Smith, Executive Director of the Arts Council.

The following events will take place in conjunction with the *Fiber Matters* Exhibition:

Saturday, April 9, 2022

Noon to 5:00 p.m.

Doña Ana Arts Council

The Diné Bé' liná from Ship Rock, NM, will have an information table during the 2nd Saturday reception, 12 pm to 5 pm. They will talk about Churro sheep and life on the reservation. In addition, they will have samples of their work, show how to card wool, and have some items for sale.

Svea Peterson will set up a couple small looms for people to try. She will demonstrate felting with a small project called felted soap.

Judy Licht will discuss Nuno felting, a fabric felting technique bonds loose fiber (usually wool) into a sheer fabric such as silk gauze, creating a lightweight felt.

Saturday, April 16, 2022

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Janna Miller's Churro farm in Radium Springs will be open to the public. Visitors can meet the sheep and their lambs. Janna will talk about raising Churro and their gentle temperaments. Svea Peterson will set up a few fleeces to "skirt," and people will be able to touch and even skirt them as well. The address is 12625 Doña Ana Rd, Las Cruces, NM 88054.

Saturday April 23, 2022

Noon - 3:00 p.m.

Doña Ana Arts Council

Ric Rao, Mary Pierce, and Julia Gomez will demonstrate dying Churro wool with natural plants and bugs that grow in the desert here in New Mexico. Julia, a native of Santa Fe, is the state's authority about Colcha. Colcha is a decorative stitch used from handspun Churro and sewn onto bedspreads and clothing woven from Churro warp. This type of stitch came up through Mexico with the sheep as people traveled north as far back as the 1400s. Svea Peterson will also have a table set up for children to try simple weaving and felting.

The exhibit will be available for viewing from April 1-28, 2022, at the Doña Ana Arts Council Arts & Cultural Center located at 250 W Amador. The hours include regular business hours, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday; First Friday Art Ramble 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.; Saturday, April 9th, noon to 5:00 p.m.; and this April only, Saturday, April 23, noon to 3:00 p.m.. For more information, please visit www.daarts.org or call the Doña Ana Arts Council at 575-523-6403.

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