

BIG BEND *Sentinel*

Vol. 93 No. 29 • October 9, 2025

Marfa, Presidio County, Texas

www.bigbendsentinel.com • \$1

Art Sentinel: Full coverage of Chinati Weekend—the people and the art

Mexico’s president is riding a rough wave of popularity

But can Sheinbaum survive Trump and economic pressure?

By Eduardo García,
Vicente Calderón
and Alfredo Corchado

PUENTE NEWS COLLABORATIVE

Tijuana,

President Claudia Sheinbaum is still riding high. Nearly eight in ten Mexicans approve of her performance, polls say—a level of support that eclipses five past presidents and would be the envy of almost any world leader. Sheinbaum’s public approval surpasses even that of her mentor and immediate predecessor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a highly popular president who left office with an equally stunning 76% approval, according to polls.

Of course, many Mexican presidencies begin with cheer only to go out with a shrug. Or worse.

But like Lopez Obrador, Mexico’s first female president wins the praise of many by attacking the country’s deeply entrenched poverty and inequality. Through the last six years, 13.4 million Mexicans escaped poverty, according to the government. That’s more than three times what three center-right,

market-friendly administrations achieved in the first 18 years of this century, as reflected by government statistics.

“We believe our country is undergoing a peaceful transformation because we changed (Mexico’s) economic model,” Sheinbaum said last week in Ciudad Juárez, before heading to the state of Baja California, Jalisco and Colima, states along the Pacific Coast. She was on national tour to tout what she says are her ahead of October 1, marking her first year in office. “It’s not about supporting those at the top, but lifting those from the bottom up.”

Sheinbaum gets extra credit from many for deftly fending off—so far—the worst threats and intentions of her U.S. counterpart, Donald J. Trump.

But while Sheinbaum’s numbers suggest a stronger-than-expected start, they also mask a more complicated reality. She’s dealing with criminal insecurity, controversial judicial reforms, endemic military corruption and economic fallout of Trump’s tariffs.

Breaker

Broader pressures already are also beginning to show, particularly here on the U.S. border.

President, continued on page 5



Artist Kenny Schachter, during his 12-day residence at the Sentinel, with POSTBOX, his “sculpture, enchilada stand and human pedestal.” Interacting Monday are Rohan and Ruhi Kamda from Singapore, their mother Olivia Pall, and Elaine Clark of New York

I was somewhere on the edge of the desert when the art began to take hold

An artist discovers Marfa, and vice versa

By Kenny Schachter

I RENTED the only manual car (within reason, price-wise) in the state of Texas from Turo, the peer-to-peer carsharing company, which allows private owners to loan out their vehicles via an app, in preparation for my two-week real-time writing, art and design exhibit/residency in Marfa, under the auspices of the *Big Bend Sentinel* (founded in 1926). If I’m not engaged shifting gears, my mind has a tendency to wander—more so than usual—and I’m a bad enough driver as it is.

Barely out of the Midlands, Texas, airport parking lot, the “check engine” light began flickering. . . .

Full story on Art 8

Brewster considers dark sky brand



JOANA BARNE—VISIT ALPINET

The vivid night sky in the Big Bend could be the new trademark of Brewster, the largest county in Texas.

Who owns the night?
County Judge Henington says the Big Bend

By Sam Karas

Brewster County

Last week, Brewster County officials hosted a series of meetings to explore the possibility of officially branding the region for the purposes of tourism as the “Dark Sky Capital of Texas.” Representatives from Visit Big Bend convened in Terlingua on Monday, and on Tuesday evening, the Alpine City Council and the Brewster County Commissioners Court joined forces in Alpine for a rare combined meeting. “Tourism is the most important thing we do in this county,” Judge Greg Henington said. “Yes we mine, yes we ranch, but tourism has brought in millions.”

Henington said that officials were inspired to talk big-picture brand strategy after observing shifts in the region’s tourism industry, which last year generated \$2.4 million in hotel occupancy taxes for Visit Big Bend. Visitation to the Big Bend parks exploded in

the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and has remained steady ever since—but brisk business doesn’t seem to be encouraging folks to settle down permanently in the area. The population of Brewster County shrank by 5% between the last two census counts, taking a bite into the potential tax pool—and in the long term, the county’s budget. “It’s become glaringly obvious to me that without growth we’ll become stagnant,” Henington said.

One tourism trend that officials want to hop on is astrotourism. Advancements in technology over the past few years have made it possible for anyone to be an astronomer—and with a few pointers, pretty much anyone with a smartphone can take stunning shots of the Milky Way. Local businesswoman Kaci Kothmann said she’d anecdotally observed this trend among visitors to South Brewster County. “The number one thing [that brings people here] is always dark skies and stargazing,” she said. “They might have come out here to hike, to sightsee, to be romantic—but at the end of the day, they all want to look up at the stars.”



OMAR ORNELAS, EL PASO TIMES

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum addresses the crowd at a “Transformación avanza en Chihuahua” event in Juarez September

INSIDE

Meet “Bullroom,”
Marfa’s newest event venue, page 6.

Memorial set for creator of “The Hill,” James Magee, page 2.

Bond reduction for arrested Marfa teacher denied, page 2.

Gates are open to Big Bend National Park

But will that spell trouble?

By Rob D’Amico

Park advocates are warning of possible damage and vandalism to all national parks—including Big Bend National Park—with the government shutdown. Funding for all but crucial government employees ended Sunday evening as Republicans and Democrats in Congress could not come to an agreement on spending legislation.

“The government has shut down, and the administration is once again putting our national parks and visitors at risk, effectively directing staff to open park gates and walk away,” Theresa Pierno, National Park Conservation As-

sociation (NPCA) president, wrote in a statement. “It’s not just irresponsible, it’s dangerous.”

Some 750,000 federal employees have been furloughed, and recent statements from the Trump administration indicate the shutdown could lead to permanent layoffs. These layoffs could further damage park resources and employee morale in the wake of what some NPS employees called the “Valentine’s Day Massacre” in February 2025, when around a thousand agency workers were laid off via email. Big Bend National Park lost at least 5% of its employees on Valentine’s Day. (That number could be higher because federal employees were

Park, continued on page 4

the eastern edge of El Paso and includes the Big Bend—is no exception. There’s still plenty of time for others to throw their hats in the ring, but for now there’s a good chance that voters could face a rematch between incumbent Tony Gonzales, a Republican, and Santos Limon, a Democrat with family ties to Marathon.

Launching a Democratic campaign in TX-23 is an uphill battle. The region hasn’t swung for a Democrat since electing Pete Gallego of Alpine in 2012, but Limon is determined to learn from the last election cycle and move forward. In 2024, Santos Limon took home 58.5% of the votes in the Democratic primary against Lee Bausinger. In the general election, he lost to Gonzales with 37.7% of the vote. “We learned a lot last year,” he told *Big Bend Sentinel*.

It was a tough race on the other side of the aisle, too—Gonzales faced off against far right YouTube personality Brandon Herrera twice, eking out a win in the run-off by just 354 votes, despite out-fundraising his opponent by a factor of four. In the end, Gonzales’ close ties to law enforcement on the border may have tipped the scales, thanks to late-cycle endorsements from the National Border Patrol Council and veterans’ organizations.

Despite the tough odds, Limon is proud to be a Democrat and considers his platform common-

sense and centrist. He recently hit the campaign trail hard, making 23 town hall spots over the span of a single week—including stopping to meet with local officials in Valentine, Alpine and Presidio. “We’re still focused on the same issues that we pushed on last year,” he explained.

Those goals fall into three primary categories: promoting economic growth, advocating for transportation and infrastructure improvements, and defending entitlement programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Limon feels that these issues are

Limon, continued on page 4



SANTOS LIMON OFOR CONGRESS

Santos Limon greets a well-wisher during the Mexico Heritage Parade in San Antonio on September 16

Sentinel News Project



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El Paso Community Foundation to host memorial for James Magee

By Sam Karas

Far West Texas

This weekend, the El Paso Community Foundation is hosting a celebration of life for the Far West Texas artist James Magee, who passed away in September 2024. The jam-packed weekend of programming will take place at sites across the city of El Paso and at the Hill, his mysterious off-grid masterwork located in the desert outside of Cornudas. Friends and family of Magee will be in attendance, but the events are open to all who appreciate his work.

Magee was a singular talent whose work falls into broad categories of painting, poetry and sculpture—though it defies neat and tidy description. He produced paintings under the name Annabel Livermore, which have since found homes in private collections across the world and the chapel at the University Medical Center of El Paso. Much of his life in Far West Texas was spent working on the Hill, a series of four structures in a remote corner of Hudspeth County that combine sculpture, architecture, music and poetry to otherworldly effect.

On Friday, the foundation will host a welcome reception at 333 North Oregon Street in El Paso. Appetizers and drinks will be served, as well as ample opportunities to connect with “friends,



CORNUDAS MOUNTAIN FOUNDATION

Detail of a portrait of James Magee by Gaspar Enriquez.

family and admirers of Jim,” per the organization’s website.

On Saturday, participants will hit the road for a memorial at the Hill. Visitors may sign up for a chartered bus from downtown El Paso to the site, or they can make the trip themselves and meet at a staging area near the base of the road to the Hill. Guests will begin gathering at 1 p.m. for a silent 1.36 mile walk to the site. Nameless Sound will perform at 2:30 p.m., and Magee’s ashes will be scattered in a ceremony at 3:15 p.m.

On Sunday, the celebration will shift back to the city, hosted at multiple locations from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Guests can continue their pilgrimage at their own place through places beloved and frequented by Magee, including Café Mayapan (2000 Texas Avenue), Museo Livermore (3915 E Yandell), and his studio at 1916 Myrtle Avenue.

Bail reduction denied in alleged teacher groping, indecency

By Rob D’Amico

Marfa

A district court judge denied a request to reduce bail for Juan Tarango Martinez—the Marfa High School teacher accused of an improper relationship and indecency with a 13-year-old girl—in a court hearing Thursday.

Martinez’s public defenders had asked for the reduction to \$1,200, in part because they believe their defendant’s constitutional rights were violated with his arrest and because they asserted he posed no flight risk, his detainment on \$170,000 bond was putting a financial hardship on his family and because he posed no safety threat to children in the area. Martinez was still in the Presidio County jail as of Friday.

A probable cause affidavit for Martinez’s arrest alleges the teacher fondled a 13-year-old girl on her thighs, buttocks and breasts, and the affidavit noted there is video of one of the incidents.

Martinez faced complaints three years earlier from three students of his welding class who said Martinez showed the girls pictures of women on his phone, accompanied by lewd comments from him. “They were all really young girls in the photos,” a former student, who asked that her name not be used for privacy reasons, said.

Assistant District Attorney Bill Parham argued against any bond

reduction—saying Martinez had violated the trust teachers should have with their students and that he still posed a risk to area students, no matter how many restrictions would be placed on his release.

394th District Judge Monty Kimball denied the bail reduction and put additional restrictions on Martinez if he did meet bail.

Attorneys from Far West Texas Regional Public Defender—Steele Musgrove and James McDermott—told the court that there was no valid probable cause affidavit in the arrest warrant for Martinez, violating his rights. It’s unclear who submitted the affidavit to get a warrant, but Parham said it was a report with a narrative of the allegations instead of a sworn affidavit. Kimball directed authorities to retrieve the actual sworn affidavit, which Big Bend Sentinel had shortly after his September 16 arrest, to resolve the issue.

Kimball said in court that he was signing off on additional search warrants in the case. Probable cause affidavits for those warrants have not been filed for public review in the Presidio County District’s Clerk’s Office as of Big Bend Sentinel’s deadline. But Parham said they involved Martinez’s phone. Prosecutors have video from the victim’s phone as evidence of the improper relationship and indecency charges, he said.

Potential layoffs and cuts coming to Sul Ross operations

By Maya Tinajero

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY SKYLINE

The Trump administration’s budget cuts to minority-serving institutions have created a domino effect of chaos being heavily felt by Sul Ross State University.

In an email sent Friday, Sul Ross President Carlos Hernandez informed faculty and staff that an appeal to reinstate almost half a million dollars in grants for technology studies at Hispanic

Serving Institutions was denied. However, almost \$3 million in federal grants through Fall 2026 stand.

Despite the standing federal grants, Hernandez confirmed that a hiring freeze within the university is in place. The funding shortfall could also result in layoffs and cuts in university operations. “We are continuing our review to identify alternatives in an effort to maximize operations and

enrollment growth that will allow us to overcome these challenges.”

“Additionally, we will monitor institutional funding levels in the coming months to identify opportunities for operational sustainability and employee retention,” Hernandez said. He pledged that “those who may be impacted” will be “notified individually.”

Linda McMahon, U.S. secretary of education, stated that the department’s reason for stopping

funding to minority-serving institutions was to further their “commitment to ending discrimination in all forms across federally supported programs.” Since then, the Trump administration has sent letters out to nine institutions asking for them to sign a compact with the federal government, requiring that they meet certain standards in exchange for access to some forms of federal funds and other benefits.

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The Marfa Parks and Recreation Board meets every third Thursday of the month at 6:00pm in the Casner Room at City Hall. The public is invited to attend.

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Mexican president under pressure

President, continued from Page 1

a rock and a hard place. The rock is her governing coalition, which is increasingly in trouble,” said Tony Payan, executive director of the Center for U.S. and Mexico at Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy in Houston. “The hard place is obviously the economic and political pressure coming from Washington.”

Noting that some 80% of Mexican trade is with the U.S., Payan added: “Mexico is by far the most sensitive and the most vulnerable country. Brazil has 7% trade with the United States. Brazil can survive it and possibly even replace it. Mexico can’t.”

In industrial cities from here in Tijuana to Ciudad Juarez, Del Rio and McAllen, the border often foreshadows nationwide trends. Many border residents interviewed sense a coming storm. With U.S. tariffs forcing cut-backs, well-paid jobs are becoming scarce, and large-scale layoffs have begun.

In Tijuana, bordering metro San Diego, more than 23,000 workers have been laid off over the past 12 months, according to Federico Bañuelos, president of INDEX, the country’s largest association of export-focused assembly plants, or maquiladoras.

In Ciudad Juárez, which shares the Rio Grande with El Paso, some 65,000 of the city’s maquila workforce of 340,000 were fired in the same period, said Jerry Pacheco, president and CEO of the Border Industrial Association.

“That’s a huge, huge drop, something unprecedented,” said Pacheco, blaming Trump’s tariffs and rising automation. “You’re talking economic uncertainty.”

Among the recently unemployed border residents is Angel Vargas, who recently lost his automotive job that he held for 10 years. He now sells burritos and quesadilla-like asaderos made by his wife and mother-in-law not far from the Paso del Norte International Bridge connecting Ciudad Juarez to El Paso.

Vargas praised Sheinbaum’s social programs to lift the poor. “We welcome all help to avoid the dark informal market,” referring to the world of organized crime.

In Tijuana and other border communities, factories once went begging for workers. Recruiter tents jammed industrial parks, scrounging for workers. Signing bonuses were common. Today, job seekers line up outside the maquiladoras, hoping for any job available.

“I’ve been sending out my résumé but no one has called me back,” said Roberto, a former maquiladora line supervisor in Tijuana. He lost his job three months ago after being forced to change shifts—a move he could not accept while still studying. He asked not to use his full name for fear of being blacklisted.

Roberto’s sister moved in 2023 from their native Veracruz state in southern Mexico. She found work immediately then, he says. Now she also frets about job security.

“As tariffs have risen, so have the prices of the products we manufacture, and clients have stopped buying from Tijuana,” said Marta, the sister, who also withheld her



OMAR ORNELAS, EL PASO TIMES

Sheinbaum greets supporters.

family name. “They prefer cheaper countries like Guatemala,” the Central American country where many maquilas have moved to.

The employment picture is just as bleak nationally.

Between April and August, companies shed nearly 265,000 positions—a contraction not seen since at least the beginning of this century, according to Mexico’s Social Security Institute, or IMSS. The comparison excludes the exceptional downturn of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent two-month economic shutdown temporarily cost Mexico 1.1 million jobs.

Amid that backdrop, Sheinbaum, 63, has unveiled Plan México. The project seeks to inject fresh vigor into the economy by creating production hubs across the country. She touted them during her visit to Ciudad Juarez and Mexicali.

These regional development centers, she has promised, will provide the infrastructure and services that companies need to set up operations. Companies also would be bolstered with links to higher-education institutions to ensure a pipeline of skilled workers.

Sheinbaum pledges to also spur growth by having companies partner with the state-owned oil giant Petróleos Mexicanos, or Pemex, the world’s most indebted oil producer. The plan calls on power-generating companies to build new plants in underserved areas to supply the industries relocating or expanding in Mexico.

But nearly 10 months in, neither the development hubs nor the energy projects have materialized. That has critics wondering whether Sheinbaum has sidelined some economic goals while she contends with Trump.

“Mexico faces two key obstacles to attracting foreign investment: an elected judiciary that threatens judicial impartiality, and insufficient electricity generation to power new manufacturing projects,” said James S. Taylor, founder of Vianovo, an Austin-based consulting firm.

Perhaps Sheinbaum’s biggest triumph, so far, is placating Trump—at least twice so far—from imposing higher tariffs on Mexican-made goods that don’t comply with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). Thanks in part to her negotiating directly with Trump, Mexico is still paying the lowest effective tariff among the United States’ largest trading partners, although it is not clear if that will prevail. Sheinbaum recently announced—a la Trump—that the

country will also impose punitive tariffs of 30% to 50% on imports from nations with which it has no trade agreements. Most analysts interpreted the move as a gesture toward Trump, since the measure will likely hit Chinese-made goods sold in Mexico, many of which are suspected of being re-exported to the United States.

In the streets of El Paso, Chinese electrical cars are spotted from time to time.

Also, a recent scandal involving the smuggling of millions of barrels of fuel from Texas into Mexico has made the internal struggles of Sheinbaum’s administration more visible to the public. Officials say the scheme allegedly was facilitated by senior government officials close to Morena—Mexico’s ruling party—and high-ranking members of the Navy, including a vice admiral and a rear admiral.

And while violence and disappearances remain high in many parts of Mexico, the number of homicides has declined significantly in the past year. According to Lantia Intelligence, a security consulting firm, the country’s murder rate closed this year’s first half at its lowest level in eight years.

“We can’t call it a victory,” Eduardo Guerrero, Lantia’s founder and director wrote in a newspaper column.

So far, Sheinbaum has managed to persuade Washington that collaboration on drug-enforcement tasks is more effective than unilateral action. On two occasions, Mexico handed off some of its most wanted drug lords to face multiple indictments in the United States. In total, Sheinbaum’s government has extradited 55 drug traffickers.

She’s won praise from even U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who referred to U.S. security cooperation with Mexico as “the closest,” following a meeting with Sheinbaum and her security cabinet on a recent visit. “Much credit goes to President Sheinbaum and her administration for taking on issues that had been ignored for a very long time,” he said.

Most Mexicans—even some of Sheinbaum’s critics—concede that the president’s popularity can withstand the darkening clouds of economic uncertainty swirling along the border. But only for so long.

Back in Tijuana, signs of the border’s trademark resilience still shine, faintly. Roberto was able to find a job but not in the manufacturing sector. He claims that employers are now much more selective since they have more candidates than vacancies and are giving preference to younger people. His sister is still employed, but some of her shifts have been canceled, adding to her concerns as she looks for ways to hold on to that job.

This story was co-published with Puente News Collaborative, a bilingual nonprofit newsroom, convenor, and funder dedicated to high-quality, fact-based news and information from the U.S.-Mexico border. Garcia reported from Mexico City. Calderon reported from Tijuana and Corchado from Ciudad Juarez, Austin and El Paso.

CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

Trio of judges to rule on congressional map

TEXAS PRESS ASSOCIATION

By Gary Borders

The same plaintiffs who are challenging the state’s 2021 congressional map are asking a panel of three federal judges to block using the new GOP-approved districts from being used in the March midterms. The Texas Tribune reported this is the first legal test for the redrawn districts, which are intended to increase the Texas congressional seats held by Republicans by five.

The hearing began Wednesday in El Paso and is expected to last nine days. Voting rights lawsuits are initially heard by two district judges and one circuit judge. Their ruling can only be appealed directly to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Several lawsuits were filed after Texas legislators redrew voting maps in 2021 following the decennial census. Those suits were consolidated into one case, League of United Latin American Citizens versus Abbott. As with the 2021 lawsuit, the latest complaint claims the new map harms the voting rights of Latino and Black voters.

Time is running short, with the filing deadline for candidates on December 8.

“All of this, every part of this, is about the clock right now,” said Justin Levitt, a voting rights expert at Loyola Law School. “The plaintiffs want an answer as soon as possible. Texas wants to stall like crazy. All of this is about what’s going to get a court to deliver an answer before the next election.”

Regulatory efficiency office is now open

The Texas Regulatory Efficiency Office is now open for business, under the office of Gov. Greg Abbott. Its mission is reviewing agency rules and procedures to cut red tape and to eliminate waste, fraud and unnecessary rules while increasing transparency for Texas taxpayers.

A news release states, “TREGO will guide state agencies in finding outdated and redundant regulations and create best practices to make agencies’ rule making processes more efficient.” It will also house a website that will assist Texans in understanding what rules need to be followed when starting a new career or business, as well as the Regulation Evaluation Portal to submit feedback or report potential government overregulation.

“The State of Texas operates at the speed of business, and this new Texas Regulatory Efficiency Office will ensure we continue to foster economic opportunity and protect individual liberty,” Abbott said.

Texas Stock Exchange gets SEC approval

The Dallas-based Texas Stock Exchange has received approval to operate as a national securities exchange from the federal Securities and Exchange Commission, KERA News reported. The announcement came exactly a year after Gov. Greg Abbott celebrated the exchange’s creation.

TXSE is the first exchange to receive SEC approval in decades. It will launch trading and corporate listings in 2026.

“Today’s approval marks a pivotal moment in our effort to build a world-class exchange rooted in alignment, transparency, and partnership with issuers and investors,” said James H Lee, founder and CEO of TXSE.

Its mission, according to a news release, is to “reverse the decades-long decline in the number of U.S. public companies by reducing the burden of going and staying public.”

How federal shutdown is affecting Texas

The federal shutdown that began last Wednesday is stopping, for now, a chunk of the hundreds of billions of dollars that flow from Washington to Texas each year, the Houston Chronicle reported. Also affected are the more than 230,000 Texans who work for the federal government and will not receive a paycheck until the shutdown ends. That includes



ALLEN BOGUSLAVSKY

An empty Texas House of Representatives Chamber

members of the military.

Texas is home to 14 military bases operated by more than 100,000 enlisted men and women, as well as large numbers of civilians working in support industries such as food service and construction.

Medicare and Social Security payments will continue, and mili-

tary bases and other operations considered essential to national security will continue to operate.

Air traffic controllers and employees of the Transportation Security Administration are considered essential employees and are required to continue working without a paycheck until the shutdown ends. Staffing shortages are expected at major Texas airports, as cash-strapped workers either stay home or look for new jobs.

In addition, most federal courts will be forced to close if the shutdown lasts very long, as their funding reserves run out. National parks likely will remain open, just without anyone staffing them.

Talarico raises \$6.2 million in first three weeks of Senate bid

State Rep. James Talarico, D-Round Rock, raised \$6.2 million in the first three weeks of his bid for U.S. Senate, KUT.org reported. That far outpaces his main rival for the Democratic nomination, former U.S. Rep. Colin Allred, who announced raising \$4.1 million over three months since launching his campaign on July 1.

Talarico’s donations came from more than 125,000 individual contributors across 230 Texas counties and all 50 states, according to his campaign. It is the most a Senate candidate of either party has raised in the first quarter of their campaign in Texas history.

“We’re underdogs in this fight against billionaire mega-donors and their puppet politicians, but more than one hundred thousand people have answered the call to build a new kind of politics,” Talarico, a former public-school teacher, said in a statement.

Whoever wins the Democratic nomination for the Senate will face either Republican incumbent John Cornyn or Attorney General Ken Paxton, who is challenging him. Neither has announced their third-quarter fundraising totals.

Hot and dry conditions expected

It might be autumn on paper, but for much of Texas, hot and dry weather is expected to continue through October. The return of the La Niña weather pattern makes it more likely much of the state will see dry weather and temperatures above average, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

La Niña forces the polar jet stream farther north, resulting in drier weather for the southern portion of the United States and colder, wetter weather in the upper Midwest and Northwest.

Meteorologist Anthony Franza with the San Antonio Express-News notes that the incoming La Niña likely will be relatively weak compared to previous years. So perhaps we will catch a break from the heat, even if briefly.

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UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title

Big Bend Sentinel

2. Publication Number

095-800

3. Filing Date

09/30/2025

4. Issue Frequency

Weekly

5. Number of Issues Published Annually

50

6. Annual Subscription Price

\$50 - \$60

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®)

PO Box P | 209 1/2 West El Paso Street, Marfa, TX 79843

Contact Person

Roger Black

Telephone (include area code)

(432) 729-4342

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer)

PO Box P. Marfa, TX 79843

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)

Publisher (Name and complete mailing address)

Sentinel News Project | PO Box P. Marfa, TX 79843

Editor (Name and complete mailing address)

Rob D'Amico | PO Box P. Marfa, TX 79843

Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address)

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)

Full Name

Sentinel News Project

Complete Mailing Address

PO Box P. Marfa, TX 79843

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box

Full Name

Complete Mailing Address

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)

The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:

☐ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months

☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

13. Publication Title

Big Bend Sentinel

14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below

09/25/2025

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation

a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)

b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)

c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))

d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)

e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))

f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)

g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))

h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)

i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)

16. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below

09/25/2025

Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months

No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date

* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

PS Form 3526, July 2014 (Page 3 of 4)

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ARTS

A mummified cat ushers in a new life for the county bull barn

By Rob D'Amico

A GRIMACE. In death. It was a cold, gray day in Marfa as I sat inside Presidio County's bull barn, my butt planted on a hard wide plank on the bottom row of bleachers that surrounded an auction pen on three sides. A deep dim surrounded me, save a beam of daylight shooting through a door I left cracked, and the wind outside swirled around the sheets of metal that formed the ceiling and walls—popping and creaking with each gust. Despite the loneliness of the empty barn, I tried to conjure almost seven decades of local ranchers hauling their bulls and heifers in for annual sales, banking on, hoping, that they would walk away with thousands of dollars to sustain their cattle operations. The auctioneer's barks and rough cadences rang throughout the barn as hardworking ranchers and cowboys licked their chops at high bids and the prospect of a brisket meal after the sale.

I glanced down at the dirt floor, and there it was—a mummified cat, brown with hardened fur, tiny paws, and rows of sharp teeth smiling up to me. Or maybe it was mocking me, as if to say, “You have the looks of someone that I can be frank with. You're better off dead.”

I had stepped into the abandoned building in 2021 to record some audio for my podcast, *Witnessed: Borderlands*, an account of the ton of cocaine found in Presidio County Sheriff Rick Thompson's horse trailer in 1991—just over yonder from the bull barn near the rodeo arena. I thought it might be cool to have some on-site audio, so I had been wandering around what used to be at points called “The Presidio County Fairgrounds,” sticking my microphone up to a horse's snout and trying to capture some kind of essence of what was going on at the now empty grounds 30-odd years ago. As I left, the cat—who I casually named “Snappy”—followed me, his ghoulis visage floating through the rotating images in my mind for days.

Four years later, I found myself sitting on the same hard board at the bull barn listening to two world-class pianists—Pavel Kolesnikov and Samson Tsoy—playing Beethoven, Bach and other classical masters. The transformation from the prior frigid, windy day was breathtaking—not because there were any fancy renovations done to the new iteration, but because it felt rustic, comforting, with full bleachers of warm conversations, even if it was an odd venue for the pianists.

You get this haunting feeling, though, of the decades of prior use for the barn—bull sales. Sure, they sold heifers too, but the label of “bull barn” spurred me back to memories when I watched cattle sales as a kid in Kerrville. Where the grand pianos were positioned, once there were the beasts.

Sterry Butcher, former *Sentinel* reporter and periodic *Texas Monthly* writer, described it better than I could with her 2002 coverage.

One by one the bulls trotted into the sales ring. Long lashed and their hides a deep red, most of the bulls looked mildly surprised at their surroundings and gazed around, switching their tails, seemingly unfazed by the bleating and yelping of the auction's ringmen. The fourth bull was full of mettle, however, and he lowered his head and plunged from oneside of the ring to the other, throwing sawdust and sand all over the people seated near the ring. One rushing pass near the rails almost snagged the shirttail of an unsuspecting ringman and then the bull paused for a moment, pawed sand over his back and gave a long and thoughtful look to the bars of the ring. The folks sitting near him gave a long and thoughtful look to the bars of the ring too, until suddenly the pattering auctioneer belted “outside!” the gate opened and the bull dashed out.

The only thing I would have added was a “snort.” Ballroom Marfa, the gallery on E. San Antonio Street, where most visitors come into Marfa, has become one of the city's most prominent galleries since its origins in 2003. Generous donations and foundation grants have made it a platform for commissioning and supporting a wide variety of exhibitions as well as film and music projects.

The pianists' performance was the brainchild of Vance Knowles, Ballroom Marfa's creative director, who has spearheaded the nonprofit's music programs. When Presidio County, owner of the bull barn, put out a request for proposals for someone to lease the space, Ballroom jumped on the idea of making it an event space, and as the only bidder, won a lease at \$12,000 per year.

I went out to meet Knowles a week before the first event and took a gander at Ballroom's improvement. I had told Knowles the story of Snappy the cat in an earlier phone call. “We actually found it when we first went out there,” Knowles said. I was in disbelief. After inquiring about Snappy's whereabouts now, Knowles confidently said, “I'm

pretty sure we gave it a proper burial.”

But as my photographer, Jennifer Pittinger, and I went to meet Knowles at the barn, we came across a bull ramp with Snappy resting on top. As we toured the barn, Knowles had a look of awe on his face—even though he had been in the space numerous times. A lanky guy, he's got a face that looks like it will remain terminally young but that also conveys he's been around the block more than a few times. Outside the barn, Knowles was chatty, often zinging one-liners about the state of affairs in Marfa.

But inside we walked through in silence staring into the high ceilings and gingerly climbing the bleachers to get a view from ahigh. In recounting how the event space came about, he noted that not everyone was so enthusiastic, that the lease space was a hard sell to the Ballroom board. “We had a structural engineer that couldn't even believe we wanted any kind of an assessment,” Knowles recalled when looking at the lease. “He said, ‘It's like my wife and I could knock this down today with our bare hands.’ I said, ‘Well, don't do that. Just tell me the integrity of this, that, and the other things.’”

Knowles is confident that what they are now calling “Bullroom” will become the most popular venue in town. “The sheriff's horse is out here too, so part of the lease was to feed the horse,” he said. Sometimes it's hard to tell if Knowles is joking—like the proper burial quip for Snappy—but this is something I'm fine with believing.

Knowles pointed out that his crew—including Method Building Company of Marfa—only wanted to make minimal improvements, such as replacing some of the lumber for the bleachers and some other safety features for crowds. “There's a rawness to it,” he said. “Sure, we don't like the look of the new lumber, but it'll all fade out.”

When the warm, hooded lights hanging from the ceilings were seen as too low, they just cut the pipes suspending them to raise them closer to the ceiling. Past the ring where the bulls formerly pranced, there's a small stage area that seems perfect for a Texas swing band

Knowles, who has long played a variety of roles in Texas music scenes, served as right-hand-man of sorts for Lyle Lovett. “I sent photos of the barn to Lyle Lovett three or four months ago,” he said. “It's not that Lyle was the deciding factor, but he's like, ‘Oh, get that thing, get it, and don't do anything other than put a PA in there. This is a place where I could come to town and just play—a natural setting.’”

In a heap of Texas irony, Lovett was trampled by a bull in 2002 on his uncle's farm and faced a long rehabilitation to his leg.

A long history of the cattle kingdom

THE BULL barn was built in 1936, but traces its purpose back to 1918 when rancher Lucas Brite formed what would become the Highland Hereford Breeders Association. In 1885, Brite settled the land around Capote Peak and eventually invested all his efforts into Herefords, with thousands roaming his ranch in the early 1900s. At its peak, Brite's operation was shipping out about 1,000 bulls a year. The Brite Ranch won numerous awards among Hereford breeders for keep-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENNIFER PITTINGER

A doorway to Bullroom leads to Marfa's newest event venue

ing the lines pure. The scruffy, dense, red-and-white coats of this stocky breed adapted well to the arid climate of the high desert. And the bulls' short horns inspired the Marfa schools' mascot—the Shorthorns.

Newspaper accounts vary a bit, but around 1957, the association held its first bull sale that would continue as an annual event.

Marfa National Bank President Chip Love recalled the excitement that brewed over the years as the sale approached each fall. “At the time, Herefords were king,” he said. “I remember as a kid, my dad used to let me put the bids on the bulls, buy the bulls,” Love said. “There were times in there when it was pretty damn cold, but the warm meal afterward made it worth it.”

Several area ranching families kept the auctions going through the decades—with Joe Lane playing a prominent role as chairman for most of the sales.

In 1996, Lane told the *Sentinel*, “These are rugged, range-raised bulls ready to go to work and improve any cowherd.” Bull sales in the 1990s were setting records, with a record price of \$6,300 for one bull achieved in 1992.

By the early 2000s, Lucas Brite's heir, James “Jim” White III, began organizing the event with his brothers, Mac and Beau, and Love remembered Beau (who died last summer) as being a master of keeping the ring moving. “He really enjoyed it,” Love said. It's unclear when the event ended, but most accounts indicate that 2003 was the last sale.

The bull barn and the sounds of an auctioneer popping his tongue and words—“49, I have 55, ttuk ttuk ttuk, I have 60, ttuk ttuk ttuk”—faded away in the abandoned barn, with only the winds and creaking metal breaking the silence, and only Snappy roaming the pen and bleachers until he (she?) too fell to decay with the years.

Looking forward

WHEN THE NIGHT of the Kolesnikov and Tsoy concert arrived, a fairly large crowd mingled outside the barn and sipped on beer and ranch waters as the sun set, darkening the clouds aloft over the stretch of grasslands to the Davis Mountains. Among the chatting and gossiping, many remarked about “how cool this all was.” And it was. Under the low, but warm lights, the audience sat in the bleacher rows transfixed on a performance that seemed to fit just fine in the roughness of the venue.

With semi-circle American flag drapings circling the arena at the top rafters, it had a 1930s Americana feel. When we met with Knowles earlier, he was clearly excited about the possibilities for booking more music—including an avant garde Western singer from Amarillo that was likely next in line.

“This space is intimate, special in Marfa,” he said. “That's what I want to do—intimate ... but it still has the capacity for so many people.”

As for Snappy? Pittinger had picked up the rigid carcass to examine it, while I merely took a close look at the deformed critter in her hands. “I can't believe you touched that thing,” Knowles commented. “Meh” she replied, “The bacteria are long gone.”

“I thought it had a proper burial,” Knowles said. “No matter how many times I get rid of it, it just continues to come back.”

We stood outside and took a final look at the steel behemoth. I wondered who would feed the sheriff's horse. Then we all remembered that Marfa Spirit Co, the distillery built out of the old Godbold Feed Mill in town, has a mummified cat on its wall in the bar, which looks pretty much like Snappy. “Maybe we can get them together,” I said.



One resident of the bull barn, Snappy, refuses to leave

OPINION



Abbott’s army

When Texas troops serve politics, not the people

By Suzanne Bellsnyder |

QUIETLY over the weekend, Gov. Greg Abbott authorized the deployment of 400 Texas National Guard members to Illinois and Oregon “to protect federal officials and ensure safety at federal facilities.” So far, there’s no clear explanation of what threat exists, what the troops will be doing, or how this mission benefits Texans.

Can you imagine another state’s troops invading Texas? The move is opposed by both Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker and Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek, who said their states did not consent to the presence of Texas troops. Kotek called the deployment “a dangerous and un-American misuse of states’ National Guard members and hard-earned taxpayer dollars.” Legal experts are questioning whether it’s even lawful for one state’s Guard to be deployed across state lines without invitation—especially for what appears to be a political mission. The Texas National Guard is a citizen force made up of ordinary Texans—farmers, teachers, linemen, welders, nurses, small-business owners and students. They train on weekends, raise families and step up when disaster strikes. During the Panhandle wildfires, Guard units used drones and aircraft to map fire lines and help firefighters. When Central Texas flooded this year, the Guard rescued hundreds of people, delivered supplies and supported local responders. The Guard’s role has always been clear—to protect and serve Texans in times of crisis.

You may support President Trump, and you may be concerned about the situation in Oregon and Illinois, but deploying our citizen troops this way should alarm every Texan. It’s also deeply un-Texan. Our history is built on the idea that government should defend its people—not impose its will on others. Texans have always fought for the right to govern ourselves, not to invade or control someone else’s backyard. We are a state that values independence because we knew what it meant to lose it.

Watching our troops cross another state’s border at the bidding of Washington looks less like the Texas of Sam Houston and more like the politics of D.C. Texans have never needed marching orders from anyone. Texans being used as a political pawn should trouble anyone who still believes in state sovereignty and self-governance. Every time Abbott lets Washington use us for political theater, we give up a little more of what makes Texas, Texas. We weren’t built to be a prop in someone else’s campaign—we were built to stand on our own two feet.

This move doesn’t make Texans safer. It blurs constitutional lines, risks turning a citizens defense force into a political one and puts us all in danger. It looks less like leadership and more like Abbott chasing a political win instead of doing what’s best for the people back home.

As I write this up on Monday morning, the issue is playing out in court. Late Sunday night, U.S. District Judge Karin Immergut, a Trump appointee, issued an emergency order blocking the deployment and relocation of National Guard members to Oregon. Oregon and California have sued the administration, arguing the president overstepped his authority. Immergut said there was “no showing that military help is necessary” and called the move a potential abuse of power and issued an order meant to halt the deployments.

Abbott has doubled down, firing back on X: “You can either fully enforce protection for federal employees or get out of the way and let Texas Guard do it.” That response made one thing clear: Abbott isn’t defending Texas independence—he’s lending

Can you imagine another state’s troops invading Texas?

out our people and our resources. And this isn’t an isolated decision—it’s part of a pattern. Abbott has spent years trading what’s best for Texans for favor with Trump and loud national headlines.

He took \$6 million in out-of-state donations to target rural Republican legislators who opposed his private-school voucher plan—a plan written to please Washington think tanks, not Texas families. He forced through a redistricting bill while flood-relief and infrastructure bills sat on the sidelines. He spent hundreds of millions building a border wall that still isn’t finished—a project long on photo ops and short on results.

Now, in his latest stunt, he’s sending Texas troops into states that neither want nor need them—for a mission no one can explain—all to keep his name in the national news cycle.

Some days, you have to wonder if the first thing Abbott does each morning is look at the whiteboard in his office and ask, “How do we get on Fox News today?”

When is enough, enough? Because this sure isn’t Texas Independence.

Suzanne Bellsnyder is editor and publisher of the Hansford County Reporter-Statesman and Sherman County Gazette. You can subscribe to the newsletter at texasruralreporter.substack.com.

LETTER

Maremma dogs to protect livestock

I’m not from around here, but would like to suggest that livestock guardian dogs are an excellent solution to herd protection. I had a ranch in Northern California with two Maremmas guarding my sheep and mohair goats. They were so effective, even my chickens did not have to be cooped at night. I witnessed one dog engage with and fend off an exceptionally large coyote, easily the size of a wolf. I didn’t think these dogs would attack, only protect, and run off predators. Maremmas are from the Abruzzomountain range in Italy. Similar appearance to a Great Pyrenees. These dogs are independent, intelligent, and magnificent. Farmers throughout the western states have been learning to employ multiple livestock

guardian dogs to manage predation instead of lethal control.

I hope you can print this. My dogs were so extraordinary, I want to spread the word.

Patrice Phillips
Ukiah, California



A Maremma with his sheep

The script so far

Sentinel’s logo has been redrawn by John Downer of Iowa City, Iowa. He’s an internationally known sign painter and also designs typefaces, including Iowan Old Style. (Some people call a newspaper’s logo the masthead, but that’s what we call the staff box, below.) You may have noticed on the front page there’s a new digital mountainscape below the logo. This was designed by Roger Black.

BIG BEND

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Sports Reporter

Contributor, Manager

Distribution

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Big Bend Sentinel

www.bigbendsentinel.com

Published Weekly on Thursdays 50 times a year by Sentinel News Project, A Texas non-profit organization.

President and Publisher	Roger Black roger@bigbendsentinel.com
Director	Don Gardner
Director	Gonzalo Garcia Barcha

Office	209½ W. El Paso St., Marfa, Texas
Mailing address	Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843
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Advertising	ads@bigbendsentinel.com

Annual subscription rates are \$50 in Presidio, Brewster and Jeff Davis counties, and \$60 elsewhere in and the United States. Special rates apply abroad. Periodicals class postage paid at Marfa, Texas 79843. Postmaster: Send address changes to Drawer P, Marfa, TX 79843

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The turkey that ate healthcare

By Chris Newlin

I’M ALREADY anxious over Thanksgiving dinner. I close my eyes and dream of the turkey emerging from the oven with a deep, golden-brown skin that glistens under the kitchen light, its surface crackling slightly as the heat bubbles up. The rough, dimpled skin looks, at first, enticing, but there is something sinister in this bundled, steaming meat. Juices bead like sweat and run along the crisp, lacquered skin, hinting at the fatty, breadly stuffing deep inside. The bird rests proudly on the roasting pan, a perfect centerpiece, and it begins to stare back at me. It makes me nervous, and I begin to squirm. I jolt awake when my wife calls my name ... “Did you drift off? C’mon. Come cut up this Costco chicken.”

The swarthy and sinister RFK Jr, the one who appears every bit as baked - physically and mentally - as that dead brown bird on your Thanksgiving table, is dismantling America’s already shaky health care system. Along with canceling access to basic healthcare like vaccines and Medicaid, his continued cuts to rural hospitals and the cuts to medical research across the board are disastrous.

Leadership within the CDC and the Department of Health and Human Services has been decimated. Kennedy fired Director Susan Monarez. The entire CDC expert vaccine panel was dismissed. It seems they believed in the effectiveness of vaccines. mRNA vaccine development has been defunded. HIV research has all but disappeared. Cancer research has been significantly reduced, as well as the study of several other diseases. Belief in the proven science and effectiveness of vaccines appears to be the number one fireable offense in Kennedy’s world.

“We need to stop trusting the experts.” Yes, he said that. The man who made it through elite private prep schools, Harvard, the Univer-

sity of Virginia School of Law, and Pace University. A 14-year heroin habit and a brain worm tempered this. His non-commitment to any specific ideology reminds me of the famous Groucho quote, “These are my principles. If you don’t like them... well, I have others.”

What makes a man forsake the values that his family has held for generations? He was raised in an atmosphere of logic, reason, and scientific process, though he holds no degree anywhere near a science or medical discipline. Why did he turn his back on the stellar education he was privileged with?

Kennedy is known for his “non-traditional” medical cure. His sidekick, Dr. Oz, the head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, was an actual surgeon. Like Kennedy, Oz is an ambitious Harvard grad and a media hound. He was even a professor of surgery at Columbia University, though tellingly, Columbia has cut ties with him and erased him from their website. He has a long record of promoting pseudoscientific theories, faith healing, alternative medicine, dietary supplements, and paranormal beliefs. Oz informally “advised” Trump during the pandemic, and promoted the use of hydroxychloroquine. You will not be surprised to hear that he owned \$630,000 worth of stock in two different pharma companies that made or distributed the drug.

In defending his firing of scientists, researchers, and trained doctors, RFK Jr. claims that he is committed to “gold-standard” science in his MAHA efforts... implying that the thousands of trials and tests and studies on vaccines, drugs, and medical protocols up to date are universally faulty. Or maybe he knows that Trump likes anything with the concept of “gold” attached to it. Or maybe it’s gold that he, himself, is after.

Chris Newlin writes for texasoutlawwriters.com.

**CHINATI
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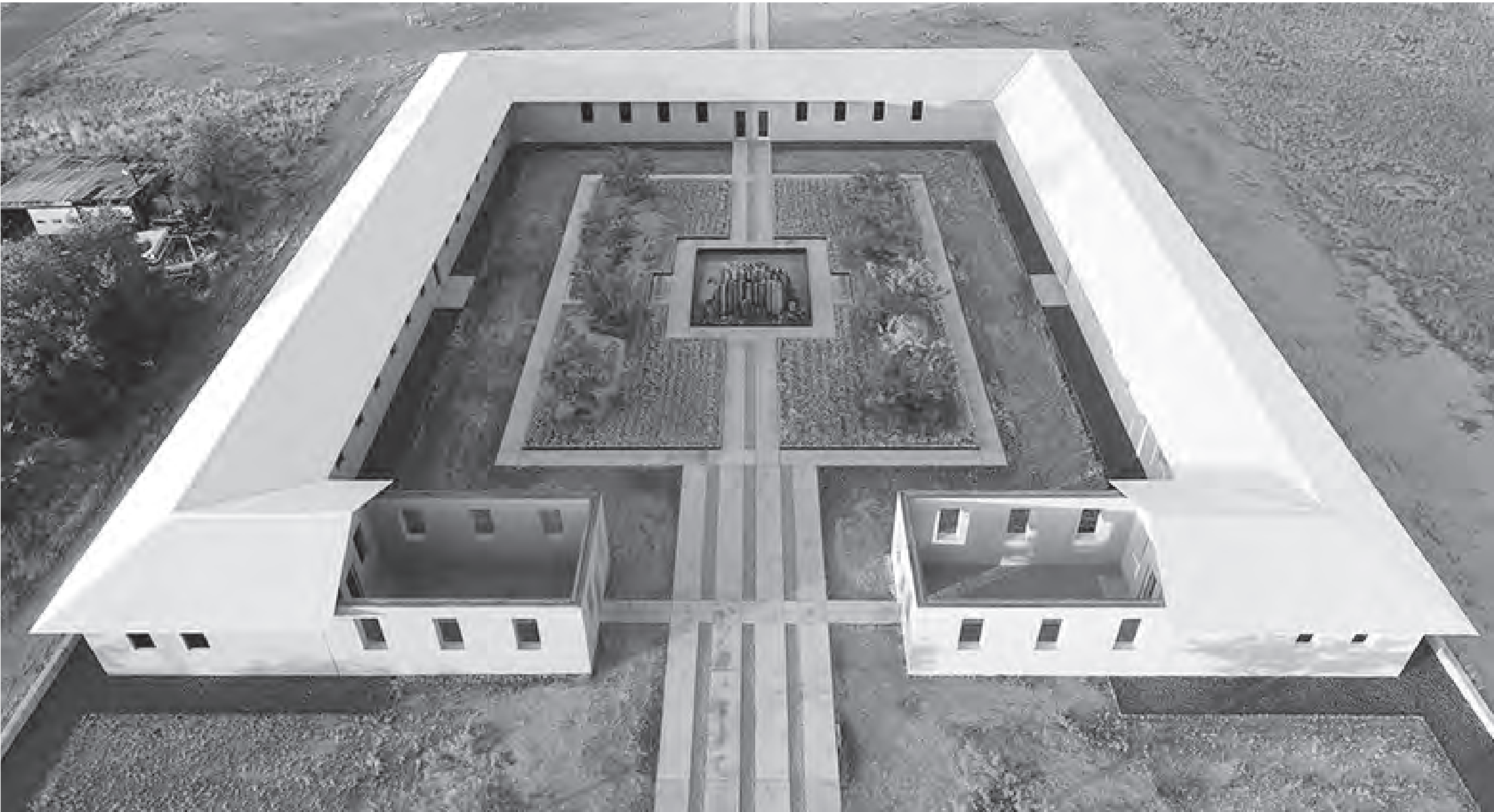
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ARTS

Sentinel

A special section of Big Bend Sentinel for Chinati Weekend : October 9, 2025

Navigating the Chinati Open House



CHINATI FOUNDATION

Robert Irwin *untitled dawn to dusk*, 2016

By KAT MCKENNA

AS THE ART WORLD descends upon Marfa this week, there’s lots of buzz about all the upcoming activities and attractions: the special exhibitions and gallery openings, artist talks and studio visits, the live music performances and, of course, the open viewing of the Chinati Foundation’s collections.

It’s still the only time out of the year visitors can see the entire collection without having to book a guided tour. To help one navigate through this sudden flurry of offerings and options, here’s a breakdown of some of the Chinati Foundation main events and exhibitions taking place over the weekend.

Opening night attractions

As festivities kick off Friday in downtown Marfa, Chinati Foundation artist-in-residence Klara Lidén will present new work inside the Locker Plant at 130 Oak St. from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. A Swedish artist currently based in Berlin, Lidén’s multidisciplinary practice encompasses video, sculpture, performance, installation and architectural intervention (she actually started out studying architecture in Stockholm). She’s perhaps best known for her installations and video performances that respond to specific urban environments and public spaces.

The live music—a constant fixture of Chinati Weekend ever since Judd brought in bagpipers for the inaugural ceremony—also takes place Friday night. This year’s act, the world-renowned jazz composer and multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell, will perform with two of his longtime collaborators inside the Capri building at 8 p.m.

Exhibition openings and talks

Returning visitors are quite keen to see the two special exhibitions opening over Chinati Weekend. *Fred Sandbeck: Sculpture* is a remounting of an installation the artist initially created for the museum’s U-shaped special exhibition gallery back in 2001, comprising six of his structural yarn sculptures as well as three painted wood reliefs. (Though the new installation follows the original in every aspect, Sandbeck considered such remakings to be completely new works.)

Oscar Hagerman: Sillas de Mexico presents a selection of chair designs by Oscar Hagerman, a Spanish-born architect and designer (with Swedish father), inside Chinati’s smaller exhibition space. Though not widely known in the U.S., Hagerman’s socially-conscious approach to design—he works extensively

with indigenous rural communities establishing industrial design schools and cooperatives—has made him one of the most celebrated and influential designer-architects within Mexico.

Both exhibitions officially open at 10 a.m. Saturday and are part of the weekend’s open viewing lineup. Special presentations and talks will be held on both Sandbeck and Hagerman at the Crowley Theater Saturday afternoon starting at 2 p.m. at 98 S. Austin Street. An additional film screening of the Hagerman documentary, *El Patio de mi Casa*, takes place Sunday morning at 10 a.m. at the Crowley.

Open viewing options

As always, the museum offers open viewing of its permanent collection on Saturday and Sunday—the only time of the year visitors can roam the grounds and buildings outside the docent-led tours. Most installations are situated on the museum’s 340-acre campus (a former military base) including Donald Judd’s 100 boxes in aluminum, the centerpiece of the collection. At Chinati, Judd aimed to integrate art harmoniously into the surrounding architecture and natural landscape. (“Art-in-context” is a phrase favored by docents.) This installation—along with Judd’s outdoor concrete works—is the most perfect embodiment of that vision, the most perfect union of art, architecture and land, and it’s the essential experience for first-time visitors.

2025 marks the 25th anniversary of Dan’s Flavin’s fluorescent light work, the other major cornerstone installation on the main campus. Considered one work of art spread out over six consecutive buildings (six former U-shaped barracks on the property’s southern end), it’s a series or progression of buildings that unfolds as the viewer moves through them.

Most other installations are housed in the barracks building and smaller mess halls distributed throughout the property, and it’s primarily a one artist/one building model. (Judd was into large-format work, not art-historical exhibits or anthology shows.) Usually these works are only accessible on the Full Collection Tour (whose five-hour length can intimidate casual museum goers).

A standout installation among these and highlight for many visitors is Ilya Kabakov’s abandoned Russian schoolhouse, an installation of an (imaginary) abruptly-abandoned Soviet schoolhouse within an abandoned Army barracks building. (Kind of an installation of a ruin within a ruin.) Considering most people associate Judd with “minimalism” (a



Dan Flavin : *untitled (Marfa Project)* 1996

term he always rejected), the Kabakov always surprises newcomers as does the John Wesley Gallery, set on the property’s southeast side. When attempting to describe Wesley’s graphic, stylized paintings, critics use terms like “pop-surrealist” or “eccentric-minimalist,” but he eludes straightforward categorization, and his inclusion in the collection is a testament to the variety of styles Judd embraced.

Three of the mess halls lining the sequence of Flavin buildings contain installations, and visitors can view them in tandem with Flavin’s work or circle back on the return. Here, you’ll find Carl Andre’s installation of concrete poetry; one of Roni Horn’s paired objects, and an installation of barely-there graphite drawings (plus two paintings) by the relatively unknown Icelandic artist Ingolfur Arnarsson. (He was an artist-in-residence in 1992, and Judd was so impressed with his work he decided to incorporate it into the permanent collection.)

It’s worth mentioning Andre’s concrete poetry is unexpectedly diverse and offers a more literary or narrative approach to the genre (he incorporates classical poetic forms and creates hypnotic renditions of historic events—often by isolating and collaging together different eyewitness accounts). Definitely worth checking out if you have any preconceived notions about concrete poetry.

Chinati also has two off-site locations. Situated on the former Army hospital building site (just a few blocks from the main campus), the Robert Irwin building is—and it’s often introduced as an artwork in the form of a building. It combines art, architecture, landscape architecture and, for many visitors, is one of Chinati’s main events.

Last but not least, the Chamberlain Bbuilding in central downtown Marfa marks the beginning of the foundation—it was the first to open to the public in 1983—and houses the world’s largest and most spacious installation of Chamberlain’s work. (The generous spacing between works is key; many have come to better appreciate Chamberlain’s work after seeing it spaced out like this.)

The Judd Foundation will offer limited open viewing inside the recently-opened Architecture Office on Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon; regular guided tours, though, go out throughout the weekend.

Kat McKenna is a decoent for the Judd Foundation.



Donald Judd : *100 untitled works in mil aluminum* 1982-86



Sillas de México: *The installation opens at 10 a.m. on Saturday at the Chinati Foundation.*

Óscar Hegerman’s human centered design

Hegerman’s chairs are designed to be built by local carpenters

IN THIS REMOTE Far West Texas town, where the high desert meets the intellectual rigor of art, the Chinati Foundation stands as a monument to permanence and stark geometry. It is a place dedicated to Donald Judd’s vision: objects that exist in dialogue with space, light, and time. For this year’s Chinati Weekend, the foundation is hosting an artist whose philosophy aligns with Judd’s other focus—community.

Mexican architect and designer Óscar Hegerman, the Spanish-born architect who has spent his life working with and for Mexico’s Indigenous and rural communities, is not known for grand, conceptual gestures. He is known for necessity. He is known for chairs.

His exhibition, Sillas de México (Chairs of Mexico) are objects that are not static works of fine art, but living, breathing records of communal craft and practical comfort.

Born in Spain and a resident of Mexico since the 1950s, Hegerman, now in his late eighties, embodies a form of architectural practice that rejects the spotlight and the skyscraper. He views his craft not as a tool for monumentality but for human connection and dignity.

His career has been dedicated to low-cost, high-impact designs: schools built with local materials in Oaxaca, housing projects that honor Indigenous building traditions in Chiapas, and social centers that bring communities together. But it is his furniture, specifically his chairs, that distill his philosophy to its purest form.

“For me, working with furniture is ‘working with the smallest scale of architecture,’” Hegerman once noted, emphasizing that the chair holds a singular, democratic significance. He is captivated by, as he calls it, “that wooden chair that is in all the villages of Mexico.” It is an object of universal need, a place of rest, conversation, and family, stripped of pretense.

Hegerman’s chairs are designed to be built by local carpenters using local wood—an open-source approach years before the term was popularized. His famous Silla Hegerman is a testament to this, designed for maximum comfort, local affordability, and easy reproduction. These pieces are never meant to be exclusive; they are intended to spread.

Donald Judd, of course, also designed furniture in a variety of materials and styles that can still be produced today.

The design community has long lauded Hegerman for his ethical commitment, honoring him with awards such as the Prince Claus Laureate. The jury praised him for his “engaged approach to architecture and design for Indigenous communities, and for bridging the gap between sophisticated design and people’s needs.”

This “bridging” is what makes his presence in Marfa so compelling. In a town sometimes criticized for its art-world exclusivity, Hegerman brings a radical accessibility.

Hegerman’s philosophy challenges the notion of the “masterpiece” and the “original.” He has always championed the replicability of design, preferring to disseminate ideas rather than own them.



Alpine’s art scene comes alive with festivals

SARAH M. VASQUEZ

VISIT ALPINE TX

The City of Alpine, 26 miles east of Marfa, offers a stretch of shops, galleries and other cultural attractions to explore. Most of the downtown area and Sul Ross State University campus were designated a Cultural District by the Texas Commission of the Arts in 2011 due to its vibrant art scene and longstanding annual events that celebrate the region’s ranching culture through the creative arts, such as The Lone Star Cowboy Poetry Gathering, Trappings of Texas and Artwalk Alpine.

The 57 murals that won Texas Travel Awards for Best Public Art in 2021 and 2025 provide a visually appealing experience during a stroll around town. The first murals date back to the 1940s with a “View of Alpine” inside the former post office, which is now the Brewster County Tax Appraisal Office, and a historic map of the Big Bend region inside the Museum of the Big Bend.

It was after the debut of “Big Brewster,” a popular mural with its “Greetings from Alpine” postcard and local historical facts and pre-dominant figures, that instigated more of the murals around town. In 2013 and 2014, Alpine’s Gallery Night, Inc. celebrated its 20th and 21st anniversaries of its Artwalk with murals representing Mexican-style calendars and painted by muralist Styllé Read. These inspired the creation of Alpine Alley Art with public art covering walls (with permission), dumpsters and utility poles in the alley that runs east to west between Holland Avenue and Avenue E.

Some of the local artists that participated in the outdoor gallery also have their work featured in the nearby galleries or



Alpine’s 5th Street Gallery resides inside the former Masonic Lodge

RACHAEL WALLER

have galleries of their own. Nancy Whitlock’s gallery, Whitlock Studio of Fine Art, is filled with her pastel paintings inspired by the Chihuahuan Desert landscape, flora and fauna. Around the corner on Holland Avenue is Big Bend Gallery, a co-op gallery operated by its 35 artists members. The gallery opened its doors last September less than four months after a fire destroyed their former space, Gallery on the Square, and four other businesses. The eclectic mix of artwork, from ceramics to jewelry to mixed media, adorns every inch of space, showcasing the creative minds

that call this place home. Across the railroad tracks in the historic Murphy Street District is Curry Studio & Gallery, which showcases Tom Curry’s prolific career inside a building constructed from “papercrete” (recycled paper).

5th Street Gallery is one of the newest galleries in Alpine, featuring artists and small businesses that are mostly from the state. Rachael Waller, owner and fellow photographer, felt motivated to open the gallery inside the former Masonic Lodge after last year’s fire on Holland Avenue. Built in 1912, the building on the corner of Holland Avenue and Avenue E has had many lives as the former office for the Alpine Avalanche newspaper, a candy store and a tire shop.

Before she opened last November, Waller renovated parts of the building, preserving the details that celebrate its history. She saved the original floors but repainted the facade and uncovered the ironworker’s names that were originally concealed at the bottom of the trim. She added dark-sky compliant lighting around the building and added minimal lighting inside to not distract from the original ceiling tiles.

Waller curates and handpicks all the items in the gallery and works directly with the artisans. In addition to the paintings and photographs, there are smaller items such as soy candles and house decor, that offer something for everyone. There’s ranching gear and jewelry made from heated iron by working blacksmith Todd Elrod, oil paintings by Carol H. Fairlie and Chris Ruggia’s wildlife artwork, including his original bear paintings that were featured in the recent Big Bend Black Bears Weekend. 5th Street Gallery also highlights an artist from the gallery each month with a reception and special exhibition.

A gossamer curtain for a church restoration

Romain Froquet to create Ruidosa Church installation

FRENCH ARTIST Romain Froquet is a cartographer of the subconscious, weaving intricate, energetic lines into a pictorial language that exists at the crossroads of tribal art, urban graffiti, and abstract expressionism. His work, often characterized by a vibrant, ner-

vous energy reminiscent of a living root system or the frantic curves of a city grid, explores the fundamental human need for connection and depth. Froquet will be creating an installation for the Friends of the Ruidosa Church (FORC) Community Day on November 1 at the church 36 miles west of Presidio on Highway 170. FORC is a nonprofit restoring the adobe church to make it a foundation of the history of the area on the Rio Grande. The event, with food, music and art, will be held from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., coinciding with Día de los Muertos.

After the event is done, the sculpture will be transported to Do Right Hall in Marfa, broken down, reframed and offered for sale, with proceeds benefiting FORC.

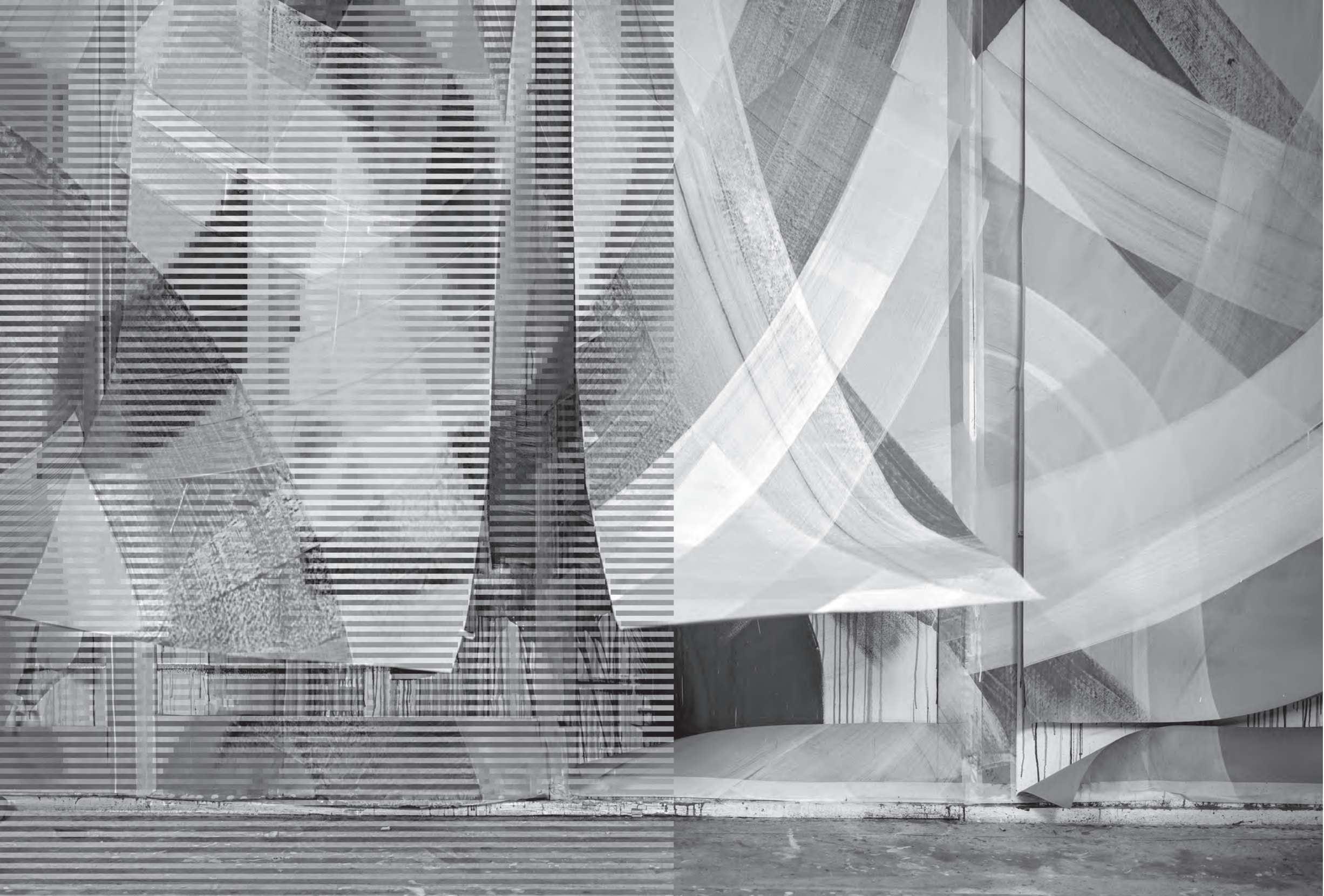
Froquet, a self-taught artist whose global murals and canvas work have established him as a master of gesture, views his artistic process as an exercise in freedom. His signature style—a dynamic blend of abstraction and figuration—is designed to open the viewer’s perception beyond the tangible world.

Froquet’s site-specific installation in the

church, titled *Gesture: The Sound of Ruidosa* will be created to honor the enduring history of the fragile structure while embracing its potential for renewal. The installation will be designed as a vibrant intervention, using Froquet’s fluid, colorful line-work to enter into conversation with the desert, the worn adobe walls, and the memory of the community it once served.—RD

For more information on FORC’s Community Day, visit ruidosachurch.org

Romain Froquet installation in Argentat-sur-Dordogne, France.+



Soothing objects in a graphic plane

TWENTY YEARS ago, Dennis Dickinson transformed a former ranching family's Sunday home into the 2d art gallery, enhancing Marfa's status as an ars "mecca."After a career spanning the Navy, television set design, and art handling in Santa Fe, Dickinson was drawn to Marfa, ready to realize his own artistic vision.

"Dennis Dickinson visited Marfa 18 months ago and his life changed course," as the *Sentinel* noted in 2003. Dickinson's goal was clear: to connect artists whose work he championed with discerning collectors. "I want art that has depth and is made by people who have something to say," Dickinson stated. He further elaborated, "I want it to be for people who buy art for themselves, don't want it to necessarily match the sofa, and want to spend time looking at what they buy."

Exhibitions 2d, named after Dickinson's initials, showcases reductive, geometric art within its high-ceilinged, white and gray-hued space. Gallery furnishings include Wassily Chairs by Marcel Breuer, inviting visitors to linger. He humorously admits, "I'm the guy that wants to sit in a chair and look at the piece."

Yet, as New York-based photographer William Jess Laird noted, Dickinson possesses a surprising "punk element" beneath his serene exterior. "You think he's gonna be this superzen, minimal, everything calm kind of guy but he's actually a little bit of a raconteur in his own way," Laird recalled, sharing a story of Dickinson allowing an 11-year-old Laird to skateboard on a limited-edition artist deck in the gallery. "If you think about how he treats that space, I cannot believe he was cool with that," Laird said.

This welcoming approach has cultivated a loyal following of collectors and a consistent



Solid cast iron sculpture by John Robert Craft.
Audience Paintings by Ken Morgan. Mixed media on vintage ledger paper. each 12.5 x 14"

roster of artists over two decades. The gallery proudly represents a select group of around 10 individuals, including Stuart Arends, John Robert Craft, Jonathan Dankenbring, Michael Diaz, Larry Graeber, Gloria Graham, David McDonald, Ben Meisner, Ken Morgan, Laszlo Thorsen-Nagel, Susan York, and Duane Zaloudek. Laszlo Thorsen-Nagel, the "newest" addition and only Marfa local, joined a decade ago.

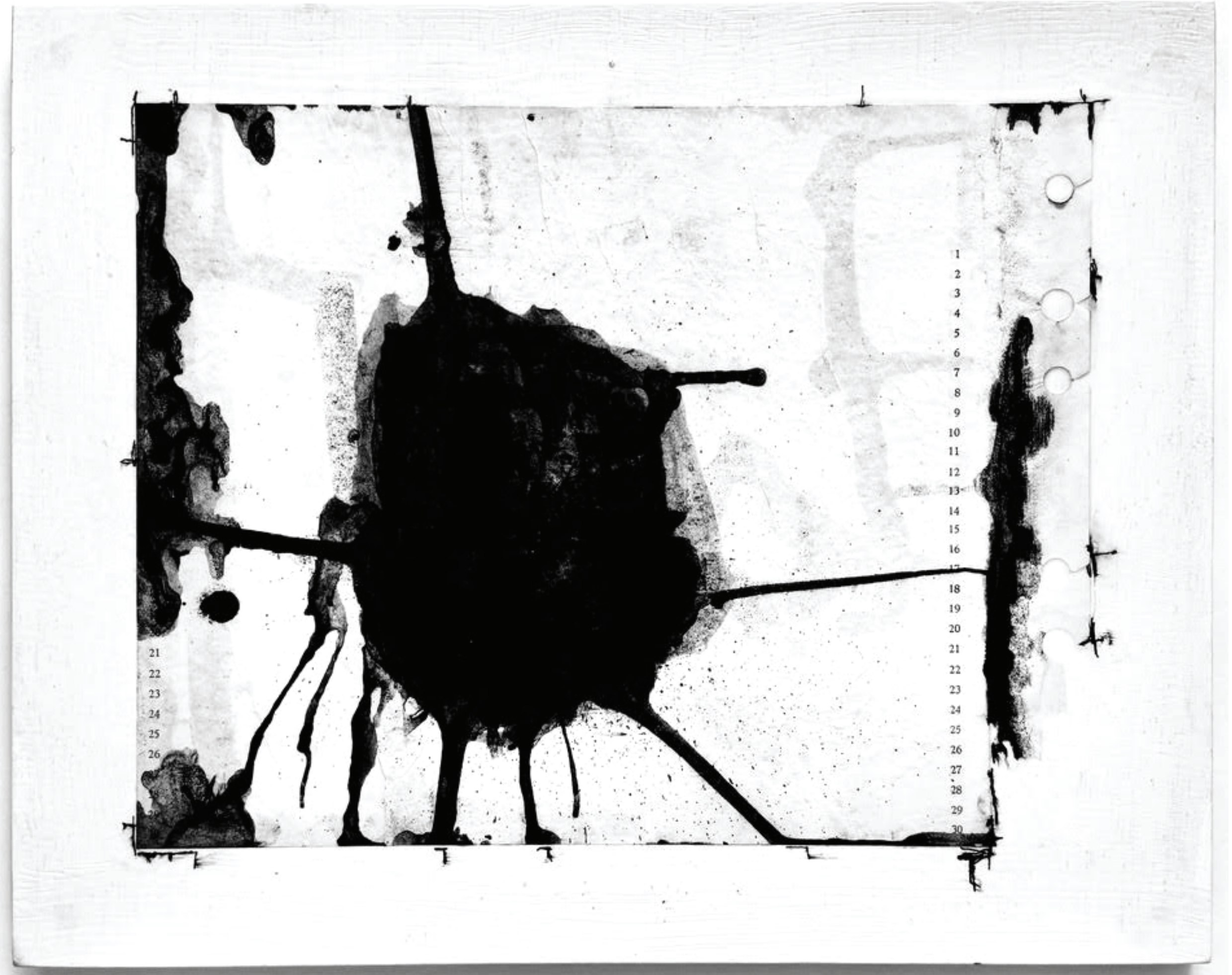
Shown here are works by two artists::

John Robert (Jack) Craft, hailing from a cattle ranch in the Texas Panhandle, creates solid cast-iron sculptures and prints that reflect the mass and dimensions of his sculptures. His art, deeply rooted in geology and metallurgy, evokes imagery of vast night skies or microscopic structures, disorienting the viewer with shifts between the unseen and the cosmic.

Ken Morgan grew up in a family of acrobats, learning to juggle, unicycle, and defy gravity. Despite his circus roots, he felt an early calling to art, stating, "The art part of my book started early. The more color the better. The less familiar the most interesting," as he shared in his bio. Initially influenced by abstract expressionists like Mark Rothko and Morris Louis, Morgan's artistic journey took a turn after a stroke in 2008. This led him to the world of CGI, liberating him from his "signature style."

Exhibitions 2d has been supported by prestigious organizations like the National Endowment on the Arts.

Exhibitions 2d, located at 400 S. Highland, will be open during Chinati Weekend Friday through Sunday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.



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MARFA  REALTY

Chinati barracks play host to Sandback’s sculptures

Exhibit remounts works from early 2000s

By **ALEXIS WOLFE**
FOR BIG BEND SENTINEL

The Chinati Foundation welcomes back the special exhibition, Fred Sandback: Sculpture, this Saturday, October 11, during the foundation’s annual Chinati Weekend. The exhibit is a remount of works Sandback first presented at Chinati from 2001-2002.

Situated among the architecture of the U-shaped Army barracks, visitors are given the opportunity to engage with Sandback’s work as it was initially envisaged. The exhibit presents six sculptures constructed of acrylic yarn and three painted wood reliefs (all works Untitled).

Fred Sandback, born in Bronxville, New York, in 1943, was a sculptor internationally known for his minimalist works made from acrylic colored yarn. After earning his B.A. in philosophy from Yale University, he later went on to study sculpture at Yale School of Art and Architecture. Today, his work is permanently on view at Dia:Beacon in New York. Sandback died in 2003, and the Fred Sandback Archive was established in 2007 to maintain and oversee the archival resource on his work.

As a child, Sandback watched Fred, his antique-dealer uncle, and his partner cane chairs and transform logs into naked female figures. Impacted by these early

memories, Sandback strung banjos and dulcimers as a teen, later building kayaks and low bows, enjoying archery into adulthood. For a number of summers, Sandback taught young students to make cloth-covered boats, calling the process a “very economical use of materials. Very light and airy.”

But his fascination with sculpture was paramount. Throughout his career, Sandback recalls the indelible impression that the sculptures of Michelangelo, Maillol, Rodin and Brancusi left on him, even referring to his enduring adoration of Giacometti as a “major love affair.”

His fascination with string and cord captured the attention of Donald Judd, one of his early teachers at Yale. Sandback produced his first definitive string structure in 1966 and worked with acrylic yarn, often purchasing it from Walmart, seeking out “the cheapest stuff,” as he noted in a 2001 Chinati Foundation interview. The artist used simple thread to describe a potentially limitless volume and call attention to his viewers’ immediate surroundings. Both Judd and Sandback shared an interest in three-dimensional work that emphasized space and materiality over illusionism. Sandback’s use of delicate yarn to outline space was a departure, however, from the industrial objects favored by Judd. Sandback likens his yarn work to drawing, as the thin lines of thread resemble those made by a No. 2 pencil.

“I am interested in a strong, immediate, and beautiful situation,” Sandback wrote in

his draft notes for an exhibition catalogue published by the Kunstraum, Munich, in 1975. Being inspired by and somewhat dependent upon the architectural spaces in which he installed his work, it is no surprise that Sandback found a meaningful connection to both Marfa and Judd’s work. His initial installation of these works at Chinati in 2001 was one of his last exhibits before he died in 2003. In the years since his death, his work continues to be exhibited internationally.

Sandback’s work is, in many senses of the word, lightweight. He often arrived to install his pieces at museums carrying nothing more than a single duffle bag of materials. Existing somewhere between drawing and sculpture, his work’s power to conjure the urgency of attention and shift perception extends far beyond its initial airy and minimal presentation.

Sandback’s main preoccupation—and part of the power of his work—was his immediate surroundings, the here and now. His most characteristic works stretch between different points on the walls, ceilings and floors of the spaces they inhabit, often presenting like a room-sized drawing or slipping in and out of the viewer’s gaze, glasslike and warping their field of vision. Adhering to these ideals—to the power of the here and now—the remounting of his work in this context and time will allow visitors to feel something entirely new.

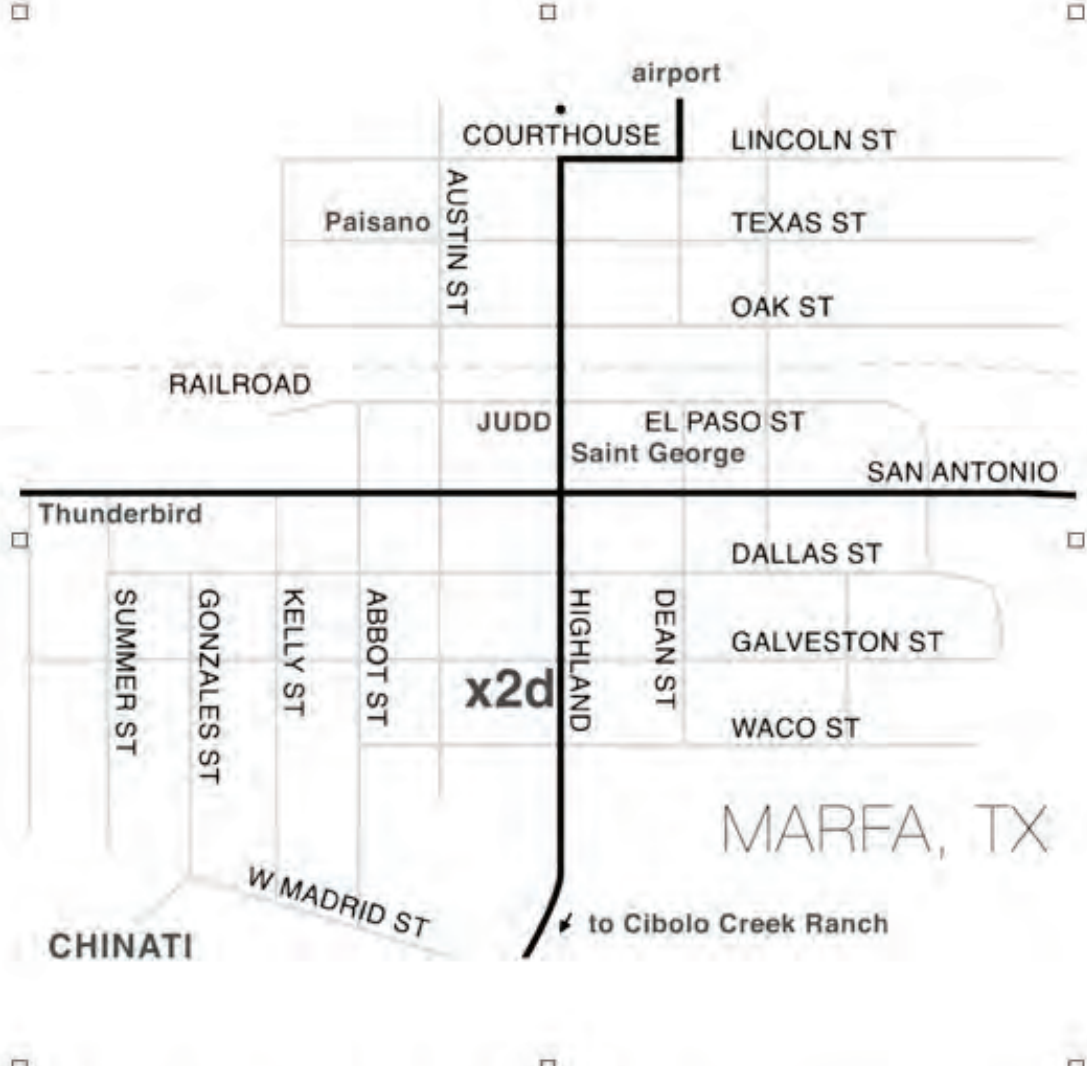
Nodding to his own work’s malleability and unbridled possibility, Sandback says in his 1986 text Fred Sandback: Sculpture,

“The sculptures address themselves to the particular space and time that they’re in, but it may be that the more complete situation that I’m after is only constructed in time slowly ... I don’t feel that once a piece is made, then it’s done with. I continue to work with older schemata and formats, and often begin to get what I want out of them only after many reworkings.”

Sandback’s own attitude towards the ephemerality and transience of his sculptures bodes curiously for the remount of his 2001 works. “My three-dimensional pieces are physically unstable—some exist for a day or so and then are finished,” Sandback wrote in 1975 notes from Kunstraum-Munich. “That’s the right scale for me. A piece can always be remade.” In its reinstallation, the artist’s enduring hope may be that in encountering it we will find something—our environment, ourselves—anew.

The special exhibition openings of Fred Sandback: Sculpture and Oscar Hagerman: Sillas de México will take place on Saturday, October 11, at 10 a.m., beginning with a champagne toast and opening remarks. Open viewing of the works of Fred Sandback, Oscar Hagerman and the Chinati Foundation Permanent Collection will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. And later, an exhibition talk by Joshua Decter on Fred Sandback will be held at 3:30 p.m. at the Crowley Theater.

Each of these events are free and open to the public. Sandback’s exhibition will remain on view through June 2026.



PHYSICAL ART OBJECTS FOR LONG TERM, FACE TO FACE, QUIET CONTEMPLATION.

X 2D

IN MARFA SINCE 2003 WORK AVAILABLE BY TEN ARTISTS FROM ACROSS THE US.

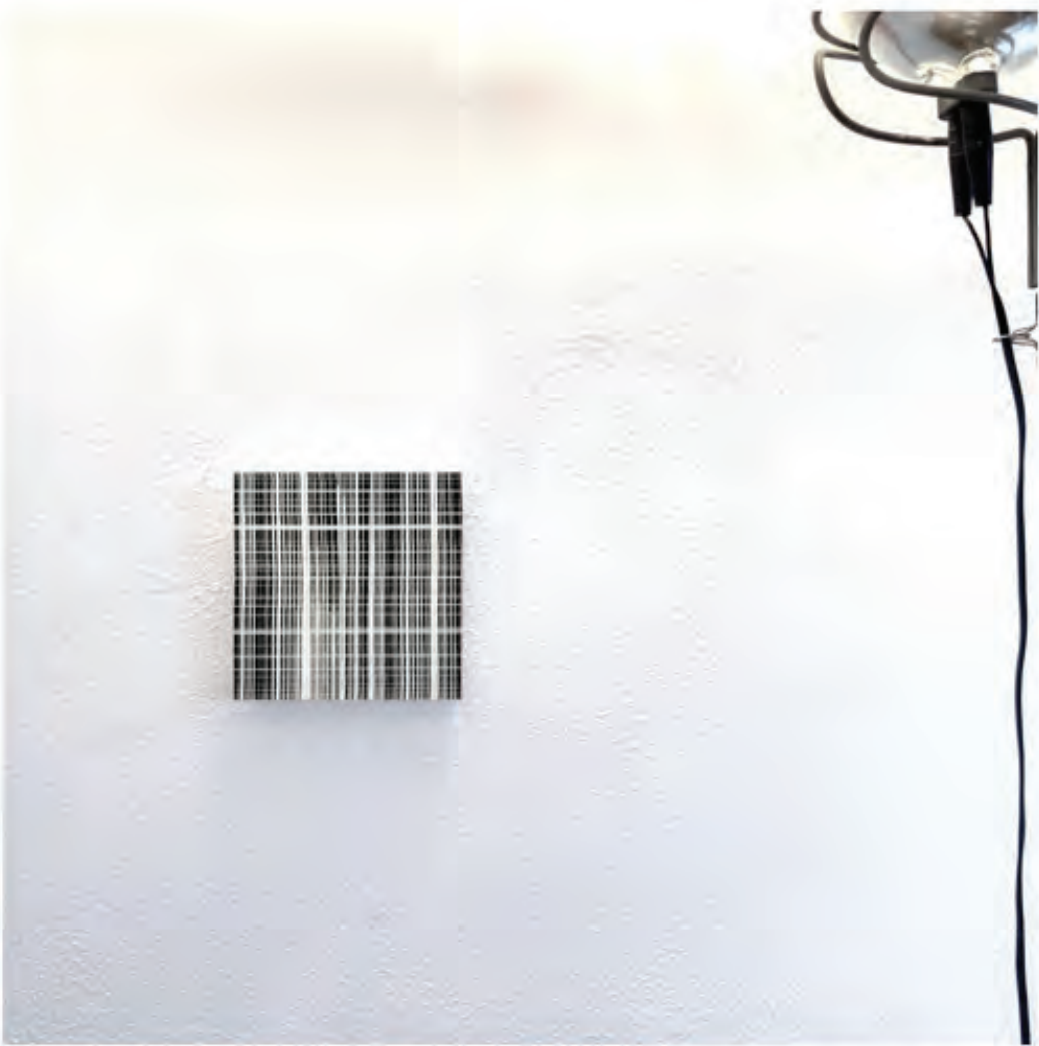
400 S. HIGHLAND.

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THOMAS CUGINI

Fred Sandback installing at Annemarie Verna Galerie, Zurich, 2001



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A savage journey to the

From the artist’s Marfa residency—sponsored by *Big Bend Sentinel*

By KENNY SCHACHTER

10/29—An auspicious start, broken down beside the highway, that began my version of Pee Wee’s Big Adventure

I rented the only manual car (within reason, price-wise) in the state of Texas from Turo, the peer-to-peer carsharing company, which allows private owners to loan out their vehicles via an app, in preparation for my two-week writing, art and design exhibit/residency in Marfa, under the auspices of the Big Bend Sentinel newspaper (founded in 1926). If I’m not preoccupied shifting gears, my mind has a tendency to wander—more so than usual—and I’m a bad enough driver as it is.

Barely out of Midland, Texas airport parking lot, the “check engine” light began flickering as my rental car was in the midst of a mechanical failure. Not long after, I found myself stranded by the side of the highway for what lasted few hours all told. When I phoned the owner requesting a search and rescue mission (ok, demanding), he chastised me for renting such an old car, which happened to be his 2014 Toyota Corolla, with 167,000 miles on the clock.

I was finally found on a remote shoulder where my vehicle was replaced with an old pick-up truck that wasn’t in much better condition



than what preceded it, with a mere 157,000
Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the earth might very well be flat. And very brown.

miles. After the switch transpired, I hunkered down for what ensued, a very fast 3-hour drive, as every airport is at least as far from the art and nature destination. So began my Marfa adventure, where I was swiftly installed as the newest cub reporter covering the art beat.

10/1 —A brief Introduction as to why, exactly, I came to Marfa

Artist-writer-designer-architect-developer Donald Judd (I’m jealous of his multiple multi-hyphenates) staked his claim, the remote—to put it mildly—old US cavalry fort was established in 1911 to defend against incursions and smuggling from both sides of the border during the Mexican Revolution. Before Judd, Marfa was most famous for serving as the location of the 1956 film Giant, starring Elizabeth Taylor, James Dean, and Rock Hudson, that filmed in the area and, the historic Hotel Paisano, which served as the base for cast and crew.

Judd began purchasing a succession of 22 buildings begging in the early 1970’s and, after construction launched in 1979, culminated in the establishment of the Chinati Foundation that opened to the public in 1986. Upon his death in 1994, he established a parallel institution, the Judd Foundation. The town has become an art, design and architecture mecca over the years, attracting hundreds of thousands that have made the pilgrimage, a number of whom remained.

The basis of my project in Juddville, entitled POSTBOX, is a lone sculpture, a few photos and some furniture I designed—a desk and chairs—in the reductive language of the master maestro of minimalism, Donald Judd. My installation, by choice, was plopped down smack in the middle of the bustling Sentinel newspaper café (a former funeral home and

country music venue) where I’ve ubiquitously decamped like an ornament on the hood of an old car, writing in real-time.

The idea was to actively engage with the residents over two weeks, from artists to locals, assimilating into the landscape and documenting the process, as opposed to parachuting in for a few days and making a hasty retreat after devouring a dose of Judds. The disparate group of people I met was comprised of only a smattering of artists, contrary to my expectations, until the Chinati art weekend and gala beginning October 9th (through the 12th) in any event.

An enterprising developer from Houston with some previous art exposure, Tim Crowley, opened an art infused hotel I was staying in (before checking into an Airbnb), the neighborhood theatre and a small art/fashion/design studio building. Surprisingly, Tim informed me that the majority of visitors don’t make the trek here for art, but instead for the vast parks, observatory and, oddly enough, Marfa is a major wedding destination. May as well formalize your marital relationship in the desolate wilderness before you end up in an emotional



Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the

one. I’m kidding.
My POSTBOX sculpture is a formal homage to Judd, albeit with a satirical slant. There is a functional mail slot on one side of the 3-foot square stainless-steel cube. Nevertheless, nothing that that goes in—whether notes from devotees seeking to commune with the divine presence many ascribe to Judd or more pedestrian, as a repository for café detritus—could ever be retrieved. Besides the spring-loaded flap, the cube necessitates a bevy of brawn to move, yet upend, as it weighs as much as a typical Judd (i.e. a lot).

Typical of my encounters tapping away at my table, I met an amiable elder artist with an unforeseen connection to my piece: he hailed from a family of multiple generations of mail



Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the earth might very well be flat. And very brown.



Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the earth might very well be flat. And very brown.

carriers.

My exhibit and writing stint got off to a particularly embarrassing start that I’ll blame on the cliché that Americans possess a notoriously poor sense of geography, rather than my own intellectual shortcomings (there are far too many to note), or I did when Tim Johnson, the proprietor of the Marfa Book company, introduced himself. Tim caught me in the midst of studying a grade school color-coded map of the US to determine where on earth I was.



Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the

Johnson was described as “a poet, editor, small-town flaneur, musician, and prolific collaborator” by Joshua Edwards, in a 2011 interview on the Poetry Society of America website. <https://poetrysociety.org/poems-essays/interviews/an-interview-with-tim-johnson-of-the-marfa-book-company> Tim is indicative of the wide and wonderful array of creatives that litter the far western reaches of the Chihuahuan Desert, particularly in the immediate vicinity



Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the

art of Marfa



Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the earth might very well be flat. And very brown.

of Marfa.

10/4 –The whole enchilada(s), my dangerous driving and desert art-habbing

I showed up just shy of 9am, as I pretty much do 7 days a week, to a packed café and find my sculpture serving as a tabletop for more enchiladas than I'd ever seen in one place, a few backpacks, and a puddle of water pooled beside it all. Save to say, the steel is no longer stainless.

Regardless, I resigned myself to such occurrences as this is what I knowingly signed up for. The upside? This exercise is proving therapeutic in combating my fanatical obsessive-compulsive disorder. Admittedly, I long to return home to New York if only brandish my sponge and resume where I left off—scrubbing and scouring.

What was more amusing, when I jumped into my truck on the way to “work”—it’s only a few minutes from my hotel (everything is in Marfa town) but I needed to drive somewhere after and in the midst of an illegal U-turn, un-seatbelt-ed, I was waived to proceed by a considerate driver heading in the opposite direction. The vehicle that let me cut in front, I only noticed after the 3-point maneuver, well performed I might add, was, in fact, the town Sheriff! I burst out laughing, in an oh-fuck-could-I-be-any-stupider act of capitulation. He just smiled back and kept on truckin’. People really are kind here.

I know lots of artsy-fartsy types in and around Minneapolis, Minnesota in the art and



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music industries (if you can refer to them as businesses, any more) which happens to be nearby to the famed rehab clinic, the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation. No coincidence there, like the old Roach Motel advert, they check-in for treatment and don’t check-out of the surroundings. Sorry for the inappropriate joke, but I’m a recovering addict myself.

Similarly—kind of—in this neck of the...desert, there are lots of Juddites that after internships, residencies or foundation positions have established footholds in and around town, from Christopher Wool to countless others. Like many before and after, Wool, who lives between New York and Marfa with his brilliant wife,



Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the

painter Charline von Heyl, was lured back in 2006-7, after a residency, which was a familiar account I heard again and again.

10/5 –Judd: the Hoarder with order who also had the hots for a bit of hot air

I’ve been trying to avoid the elephant in the barrel-ceilinged barracks, Donald Judd, who fabricated his way into the canons of art, design and architecture history. But I’ll share a few thoughts on the subject without resorting to rehashed cliches (hopefully). Most incongruously, the godfather of minimalism was a monumental magpie that out-accumulated even me. Imagine that. But where we differ most dramatically is the fact that Judd was a hoarder with order—everything, and there were lots (and lots of lots) was compartmentalized and codified in the extremis.

The scope of Judd’s holdings traversed Navajo rugs; furniture and design by Alvar Aalto, Mies van der Rohe, Gerrit Rietveld, Rudolph Schindler, Gustav Stickley; and, art by George Earl Ortman, Agnes Martin, Lucas Samaras, Jasper Johns. Yayoi Kusama, H.C. Westermann, John Wesley, Fred Sandback, Roni Horn, among many others. The avid bibliophile collected more books than the Library of Congress, which Trump hasn’t gotten around to pruning—just yet.

Another Juddian tidbit not widely known was his penchant for pipes—bagpipes that is. Judd collected examples of the (wildly annoying, to me) woodwind instrument that, before they were even known in Scotland, originated in the Middle East or North Africa, and dated at least to ancient Egypt (around 400 BC) and perhaps even earlier—according to AI anyway. Best of all was his stated reasoning for insisting on bagpipe performances at many of his openings and said to be constantly playing in the background of his NYC building on Spring Street: “When the bagpipes start, the conversations end.”

10/7–Breathing architecture and artworks that walk

The ginormous, barrel-shaped, galvanized iron roofs of the artillery sheds and military airplane hangars repurposed by Judd housing portions of his encyclopedic collections of

art, design, books (and bagpipes!) are wondrous in and of themselves. Everything he breathed on, despite the conceptual rigidity and austerity that most would equate with his all-encompassing Weltanschauung (worldview), in actuality, is imbued with heartfelt passion and humanity.

Another widely held misconception of Judd, that I admittedly acceded to, was his bellicose espousal of the dictum: form over function. His life’s work is, to me at least, a utopic vision obstinate in focus but also unstinting in his embrace of artists he responded to (that were or became friends, like Roni Horn), facilitating



Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the earth might very well be flat. And very brown.

commissions permanently situated throughout Marfa. I was admittedly taken aback by how touched I was and, moreover, the devoted community of custodians that tend to it all and explicate to the droves of tourgoers with a grace and tenderness akin to caretakers in a hospice.

The architecture and artworks, though, exude mortal qualities that took me aback. The buildings and sculptures speak, communicate—well, they randomly radiate sounds—through a

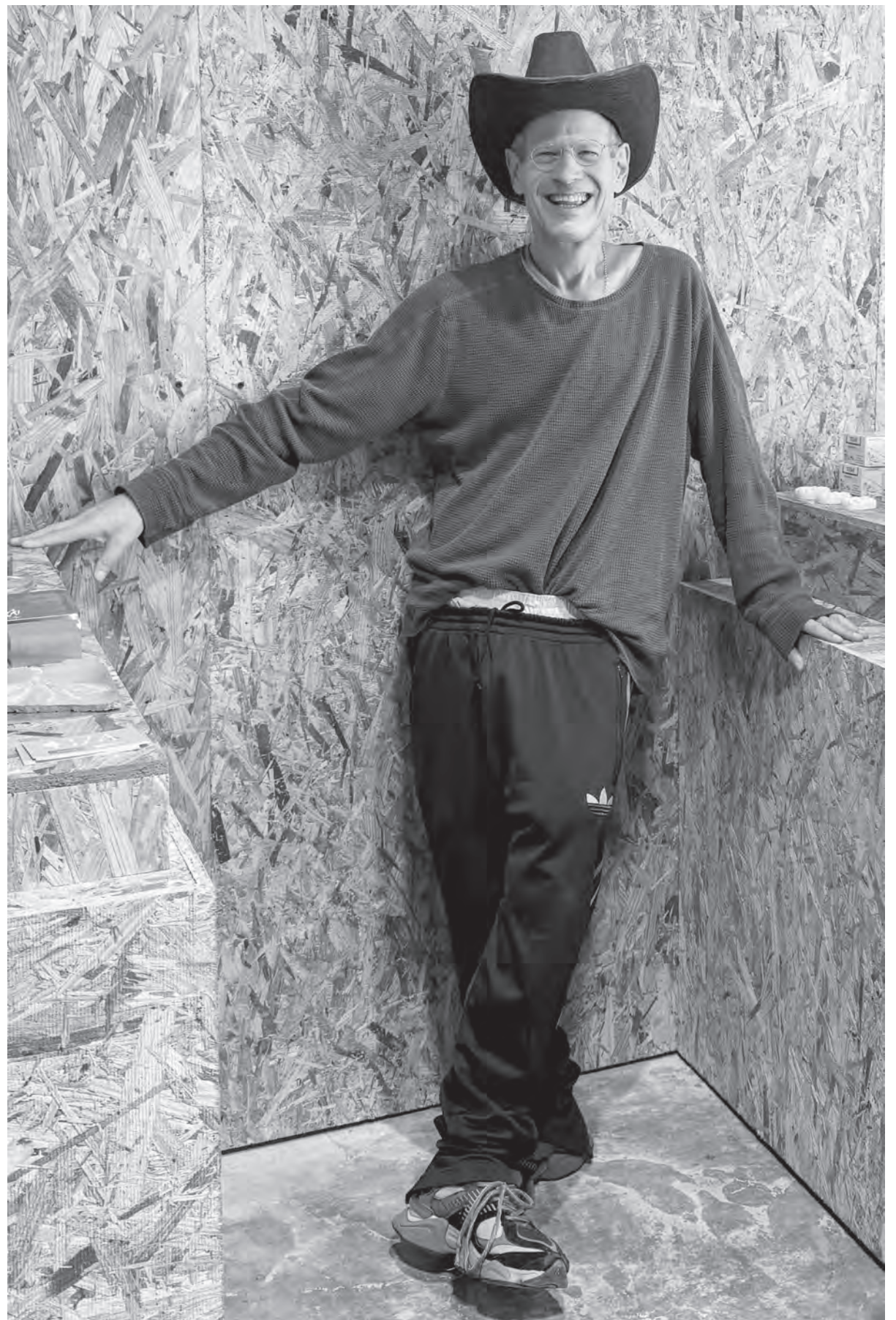


Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the

series of pings, dings and rings that are audible as you make your way through the environs. If any foundation curators are reading this, I’d like to install sensitive recording equipment in the vaulted rooftops and amidst the grid of “100 untitled works in mill aluminum, 1982-1986”, large scale sculptures that form an endless horizon in two of the Chinati structures.

One last thing regarding the 100 untiled works. Due to extremes of temperature, these pieces possess additional seemingly humanoid tendencies, perpetually incrementally shifting over the course of the nearly 40 years they’ve been “living” in the sheds—sorry for my characterization, Donald. A curator referred to the movements, caused by expansions and contractions of the metal, as the sculptures’ “walking”. I hope the animation I’m working on depicting this phenomenon (in my, umm, inimitable manner) doesn’t exacerbate the grave-spinning of Judd I may have stirred already.

Kenny Schachter is an artist and writer based in New York. His website:www.KennySchachter.art



Flying into Midland, 3 hours away from Marfa, like every airport seemingly is... I am beginning to think the earth might very well be flat. And very brown.



Untitled, poster painting 2015

Klara Lidén, resident at Chinati, hosts an open house

By Ariele Gentiles

CELEBRATED multidisciplinary artist Klara Lidén’s two-month residency at The Chinati Foundation culminates with an Open Studio on Friday, October 10, from 4 to 7 p.m. to kick off Chinati Weekend at the Locker Plant, 130 E. Oak St. It is free and open to the public.

Born in Stockholm in 1979 and currently residing in Berlin, Lidén has exhibited work extensively. The depth and breadth of her practice continues to defy tidy categorization—her work spans sculpture, video, structural intervention, performance, photography and installation. Frequently, she incorporates materials

sourced from urban environments—waste bins, cardboard, concrete or recyclables—which she transforms through an inventive and occasionally playful approach, a process she has characterized as “unbuilding.”

Highlighting the solemn playfulness and humor in the artist’s work, famed art curator and essayist Helen Molesworth wrote in a 2011 *Artforum* feature that works exhibited by Lidén at an Artpace residency in 2010 “amplified her slapstick sensibilities in ways that brought to mind the silent performances of Buster Keaton.”

Having attended the Royal Institute of Technology’s School of Architecture in Stockholm, the Berlin University of the Arts, and



Klara Lidén

Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Lidén continues to be motivated by her interests in architecture, its surrounding spaces, social constructs related to materials, and the relationship between the human body and these elements, consistently exploring the physical and psychological boundaries of the spaces we inhabit, both public and private.

Recent solo exhibitions include Square Moon at Sadie Coles in London (2024), Verdelvedere at Reena Spaulings Fine Art in New York (2024), and (o, o, o) at Galerie Neu in Berlin (2023).

Her work can be found in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

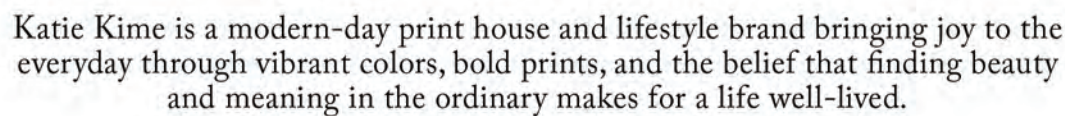
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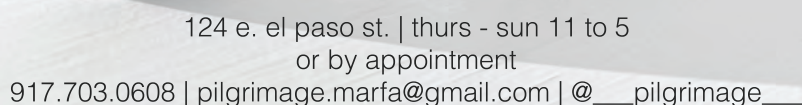


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MARFA CLINIC 105 E OAK STREET





ALEX MARKS

Brian Espinoza: From Chez Panisse to Chinati

Whose night is it to make dinner?

‘Do it all’ whiz chef Brian Espinoza returns for Chinati dinner

ONCE upon a time in 2006, chef Brian Espinoza attended his first Chinati Open House dinner with his dear friend Sam Hamilton. During dinner in the arena that evening, swept up in the glorious sights and heady buzz of socializing with friends and visitors from all over the world, the magic happened. He leaned over to his friend and shared his newfound desire—“To one day do this dinner.”

He has attended every single dinner since that time and last year brought his dream into reality in the biggest way possible. He rented a refrigerated truck out in Oakland, California, his home, filled it with fresh produce and anything else he couldn’t source out here and drove out to Marfa and set to work. He wowed the crowd.

He admits, “I knew at some point it would happen for me to chef the dinner. Last year was that moment. While it was indeed a mountain of work, every bit of it was worth it. I don’t have the means to write large checks to organizations that I love ... but I can cook! I love Marfa and the Chinati Foundation.”

It’s not normal to attend a dinner for approximately 250 guests, look around the room and think, “This I want to do.” Most people give at least a little pause with a dinner for only six. Brian is a big-picture guy who can whip out his sewing machine and go to town making new, huge, custom cushion covers, table runners and napkins, repaint the interior of the house, install an HVAC system, build a small pool, make complex multicourse dinners, trim up the yard and cacti in the alley, plant fruit trees,

build a shed, attend endless art and social events, including those he hosts, work on his tan, be pleasant to all he encounters, including a snake in his woodpile, and call it a short vacation.

His cheffing began when he interned and trained at Chez Panisse while a student at UC Berkeley’s School of Architecture. The owner of that restaurant, Alice Waters, still revered for her then trendsetting commitment to local farmers, their produce, and crafting a menu around what crops were fresh and in season, has become a household name. The restaurant continues to thrive.

Brian, on the other hand, stepped away from the kitchen there and will once again become a man in motion to make this dinner another special night for those in attendance. He wants to add his personal touch to what he felt at the first dinner with all the elements of people around a table enjoying each other’s company and food—when something “fantastic” transpired in the arena.

Alice Waters hired Brian for an open position in the kitchen after he auditioned by making her a tryout lunch. “Oddly, the lunch I made for Alice Waters which landed me the job is very similar to the meal I’m preparing for Chinati dinner this year,” he says.

Hopeful questioning about the menu brought this response, “I don’t want to spoil the surprise! But it definitely taps into my Mexican heritage.”

The gobsmacking task of planning and prepping a meal for 250 has begun in the kitchen, as has the intrigue and mouth watering anticipation of those who know his food. Brian, the hardest working, most fun loving perfectionist brings his talents to another dinner, another year of sharing his love of cooking and most admired stamina to those lucky enough to hear the words, “Dinner is served.”

JULIE SPEED

OPEN STUDIO

oct 10th & 11th
FRI & SAT 9-4
520 W. CATHERINE ST
(next door to the Chinati Foundation)

EMPTYMAN &
BIRD, WATCHING

pdf catalogs available:
juliespeed@gmail.com

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website: juliespeed.com

EMPTYMAN (detail)
2025 gouache & collage
60 X 40 inches

POSTERS

RICHARD PRINCE

17 May – 07 December 2025

Hetzler | Marfa



ROGER BLACK

Guests at the gala dinner last year

Alpine author Sid Balman tackles violent extremism

SID BALMAN is an author, Pulitzer-nominated journalist and writer in residence at Sul Ross State University in Alpine who—as a war correspondent and national security advisor—has covered extremism and violent extremism for much of his career.

He has covered wars in the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, and has traveled extensively with two American presidents and four secretaries of state on overseas diplomatic missions. At Sul Ross, he heads a small journalism program and oversees the online student newspaper, the Skyline.

His Seventh Flag Trilogy has received numerous awards for best-selling novels, and his most current work—a fictional account of characters and their experiences surrounding the Uvalde school shooting, titled *The Mural*, will be released in February.

On September 25, Balman penned an op-ed for Big Bend Sentinel on what’s needed as a “wakeup call, one that demands new thinking on how to deal with violent extremism.”

The Sentinel sat down with Balman to talk about his past experiences, how he views the conflicts in our country today, and his upcoming novel.

Your trilogy deals with West Texas characters confronting an increasingly dystopic landscape. **What in your background brought out these themes?**

I was based out of Washington, D.C., for 25 years. I served with the Diplomatic National Security Force, the United National Wars conflict, traveling with presidents and secretaries. I covered extremism and violent extremism around the world.

A lot of what I covered was efforts to mitigate that extremism. I consulted on a number of projects where national agencies wanted to

find non-kinetic alternatives to stopping this growing wave of violence. There were scientists, psychologists, journalists, and spooks involved.

After my kids were grown and had moved out, I realized that I had this book—like all of us journalists do—in our back pocket, and that was the trilogy of novels I wrote. All three of them were on the common denominator of radicalism and violent extremism and how it is creeping into America.

It’s not just ISIS and Al-Qaeda in foreign lands. We’re seeing community indicators of that sort of extremism in America.

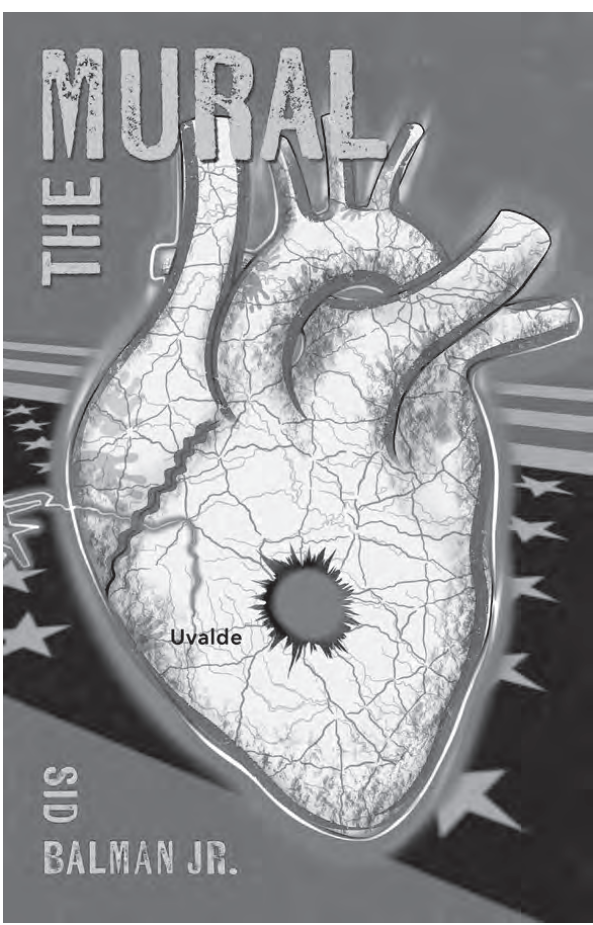
The trilogy, while fiction, is based on some real locations and people, right?

It’s all based on two families out of Dell City. A buddy of mine has a ranch out there, an off-the-grid thing. We’d go out there for years and just fill a pickup truck up with power tools and beer and spend some time building things. We built a few houses, had a pistachio field. One of the families out there was Laura Lynch’s, one of the founders of the Dixie Chicks.

So these two families are the [core] of the books. One is fashioned after the Lynches. The other is a Syrian Muslim family. These two families built this empire behind farming. And the trilogy goes from just after World War II to 25 years into the future. That’s the last book, and in the last book, sadly enough, some of the things that I’ve written about are coming true right now.

Writing about fictional West Texas characters is one thing, but looking into the Uvalde shooting had to be difficult, right?

A friend of mine, Kleo Belay, one of my editors, said, “You know, that’s a topic that needs to be written on in a way that looks at this issue of violent extremism in the United States.” Where’s that coming from and how’s that happening? What could be worse than the murder of 19 chil-



The Mural will be out in February

dren and two teachers? Both of those teachers, by the way, were Sul Ross graduates. How do you tell that story?

I spent some time there, and I was really taken by the murals they had in the town square. I came up with the idea of doing the story through the experiences of one of the artists commissioned to do a mural. If I had to say what the book is about, it’s about trauma and healing from trauma. And it looks at this phenomenon of violent extremism in the United States when these people are radicalized in various ways. What are the red flags? Alienated individuals, sexually abused as kids, bullied. They often have

an emotional problem or physical handicap. They have single parents, and they spend a lot of time in these back alleys of the Internet. So, Ramos, the shooter in Uvalde, had checked all the boxes, all of them.

Did you have any concerns about fictionalizing such a horrific event?

I had a lot of concerns about it inspiring other people. In dealing with the shooter, I don’t use his name. So, in the preamble of the book, I write a few paragraphs and use only pronouns of him, he—for a couple of different reasons. One is to do my best not to popularize the person. But I also don’t want to dehumanize him. I spent a lot of time with the families trying to explain what he is. I’m not trying to excuse his behavior. But we don’t understand what’s motivating these people, we can’t stop it. You have no prayer of stopping a lone wolf shooter. But if you can work with the community around them, you can prevent it.

I’m gonna go there, to the Uvalde library to talk and sign books. And I wonder how it’s going to go over when they see it. What are these families gonna think? None of them are named. So, yes, that does concern me.

But, hey, wake up America. We’re flooded with this every day, so let’s dissect it.

What’s an example in the book about trying to heal from the trauma?

There’s the twin sister of a girl who was killed in the classroom, who happened to be at the dentist that day. And she feels horrible guilt, and she comes in and helps with the mural. It’s a cast of characters all having their own trauma, some violent, some emotional. What is it that heals them? And I hope that it comes through as this kind of a message of hope. It sounds hokey, me talking about it, but it’s a love of humanity that is missing. In the end, that’s the message of the book.—ROB D’AMICO



The gallery on Highland

Edward Emery Buyer Beware at Wrong Marfa

Wrong gallery is hosting a second exhibition by San Francisco artist Edward Emery. Edward Emery visited Marfa in 2010 with his father and twin sister when he was 11 years old. They were on a summer road trip and on their way back to California. Emery became fascinated with Marfa, and came across the 2013 “60 Minutes” episode about Marfa. In that episode he learned about Marfa artist Camp Bosworth and became obsessed with Camp’s work, even doing a miniature model of a gold revolver.

After graduating from college in Scotland with a political science degree, Emery decided to pursue an art career. He contacted Bosworth through Instagram and asked to do a studio visit when he visited the town again.

Bosworth took a look at Emery’s work on Instagram and invited him to have a show at Wrong. The first ex-

hibition in February 2024 was a sell-out show.

Edward Emery was born in 1999 in San Francisco. Emery is a self-taught painter and woodcarver whose work focuses on people and the scenery of everyday life in the United States. Growing up in San Francisco, he is heavily influenced by the city’s vibrant history of street art and underground comics; thus, his portraits frequently combine whimsy and storytelling with a style that oscillates between realism and caricature.

Emery says of his work, “It serves as a form of visual record keeping; it documents the various spaces in my life and the multitude of characters that inhabit them.”

Emery’s Buyer Beware runs through November. The opening is today, Thursday, October 9, from 5 to 7 p.m. at 110 N. Highland Avenue. Everyone is invited to the opening. The Wrong Bar will have drink specials available.

HOMES FOR SALE



1407 W Sacramento St, Marfa
2 Bed, 1 Bath, 1,080 Sq Ft
Listing Price \$429,000



1011 N Ordenar St, Marfa
1 Bed, 1 Bath, 1,080 Sq Ft
Listing Price \$595,000



1303 N Ordenar St, Marfa
2 Bed, 2.5 Bath, 2,602 Sq Ft
Listing Price \$1,300,000



301 E Columbia St, Marfa
4 Bed, 3 Bath, 2,432 Sq Ft
Listing Price \$575,000



Marfa Vista Realty, Mary Farley, Broker, 1501 W Washington St, Marfa TX 79843

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The *Sentinel* is changing,
but before moving too far,
we want to hear from you.
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or wrong? What do you
want to read and see
in the paper? Let us know!

—Roger Black
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OPEN HOUSE
1303 N ORDENAR ST
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 12 -2 PM

- 2 Bedrooms, 2.5 Baths
- 2,602 Square Feet
- Open Concept
- Main Home & Casita
- Private Yard
- Expansive Porches
- Two Fireplaces



OPEN HOUSE
1011 N ORDENAR ST
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 12 -2 PM

- 1 Bedroom, 1 Bath
- 1,080 Square Feet
- .78 Acres, 6 Lots
- Open Floor Plan
- Large Terrace
- Landscaped Back Yard
- Gas Fireplace



\$1,300,000

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CHINATI
WEEKEND

OCTOBER 10–12,
2025

MARFA,
TEXAS



FRIDAY

OCTOBER 10

MARFAMUST
(MARFA UNTITLED STUDIO TOUR)
10:00 A.M.–4:00 P.M.
VISIT THE SPACES OF
MARFA-BASED ARTISTS
MORE INFO AT MARFAMUST.ORG

OPEN STUDIO
4:00–7:00 P.M.
ARTIST IN RESIDENCE
KLARA LIDÉN
LOCKER PLANT, 135 E. OAK STREET

PERFORMANCE
8:00 P.M.
ROSCOE MITCHELL TRIO
DJ SET BY CARIÑO DE LA RADIO
THE CAPRI,
603 W. SAN ANTONIO STREET

SATURDAY

OCTOBER 11

EXHIBITION OPENINGS
10:00 A.M.
FRED SANDBACK: SCULPTURE
OSCAR HAGERMAN: SILLAS DE MÉXICO
CHAMPAGNE TOAST AND REMARKS
1 CAVALRY ROW
OPEN VIEWING
10:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M.
FRED SANDBACK, OSCAR HAGERMAN,
AND THE CHINATI FOUNDATION
PERMANENT COLLECTION
1 CAVALRY ROW /
106 N. HIGHLAND AVENUE /
805 W. BONNIE STREET

RELATED EXHIBITION
10:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M.
ROSCOE MITCHELL: CONGLIPTIOUS
MAINTENANT, 1825 RABBIT ROAD
SELF-GUIDED VISITS
10:00 A.M.–NOON
THE JUDD FOUNDATION
ARCHITECTURE OFFICE
102 N. HIGHLAND AVENUE
EXHIBITION TALK
2:00 P.M.
ALEJANDRA DE LA MORA
ON OSCAR HAGERMAN
CROWLEY THEATER,
98 S. AUSTIN STREET

EXHIBITION TALK
3:30 P.M.
JOSHUA DECTER
ON FRED SANDBACK
CROWLEY THEATER,
98 S. AUSTIN STREET
BENEFIT DINNER
5:00 P.M.
COCKTAILS BY
SIETE LEGUAS TEQUILA
CANAPÉS BY LA PÁJARA
7:00 P.M.
SEATED DINNER BY
CHEF BRIAN ESPINOZA

SUNDAY

OCTOBER 12

FILM SCREENING
10:00 A.M.–NOON
EL PATIO DE MI CASA,
Q&A WITH DIRECTOR
CARLOS HAGERMAN
CROWLEY THEATER,
98 S. AUSTIN STREET

OPEN VIEWING
10:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M.
FRED SANDBACK, OSCAR HAGERMAN,
AND THE CHINATI FOUNDATION
PERMANENT COLLECTION
1 CAVALRY ROW /
106 N. HIGHLAND AVENUE /
805 W. BONNIE STREET

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE
AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
WITH THE EXCEPTION OF
SATURDAY NIGHT'S
BENEFIT DINNER.

Image credit: Donald Judd, Artillery sheds with 100 untitled works
in mill aluminum, 1982–86. Permanent collection, The Chinati
Foundation, Marfa, Texas. Photo by Alex Marks, courtesy The
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