



State of the Arts

GRAND JUNCTION COMMISSION ON ARTS & CULTURE January 2002

2001 Annual Report

Established in 1990, the Commission on Arts and Culture is dedicated to developing and improving the quality, quantity, accessibility and affordability of arts and culture for the citizens of Grand Junction.

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Grand Junction Strategic Cultural Plan Revised

The Arts Commission and a 50 member citizen advisory steering committee spent four months and 25 meetings updating the cultural plan, originally written in 1991. The newly revised plan addresses a broad range of community arts needs and issues:

- ◆ Arts Education
- ◆ Cultural Facilities
- ◆ Historic Preservation
- ◆ Funding Resources & Economic Benefits
- ◆ Local Artists & the Arts Industry
- ◆ Marketing, Promotion, & Cultural Tourism
- ◆ Urban Design & Public Art

The new plan will be a blueprint for cultural development over the next decade. It provides a framework to encourage more arts activities, new cultural facilities, arts education for children, increased support for local artists, and additional public art. It recognizes arts and culture as a vital local industry, a major economic development tool, and an active part of the community.

“We hope to enhance Grand Junction’s and Mesa County’s position as an artistic center on the Western Slope,” says Pamela Blythe, Chair of the Cultural Plan Steering Committee. “We want to support visual, performing, literary, and media arts in many programs and forms.”

Commission Support for Arts & Cultural Activities

To encourage *more arts for more people* almost 40% of the Arts Commission’s budget helps underwrite Grand Junction arts and cultural events and projects. Through a competitive grant process \$25,000 was donated to 18 organizations in 2001 - \$20,000 in City funds and \$5,000 from the Colorado Council on the Arts. These 18 projects had a combined audience of 25,500

people and leveraged an additional 1000 in other donations.

The annual funding encourages artistic excellence, new events, cultural diversity, programs which educate people about the arts, and projects with broad community benefit.

Visual arts projects the Commission helped underwrite included:

- KRMJ-TV (PBS) "Western Bounty" segments featuring local arts and artists
- Brush & Palette Club Regional Art Exhibit
- Western Colorado Watercolor Society National Art Exhibit

Public Art Projects

In the spring of 2002, water will flow from a new sculptural fountain in the plaza of Two Rivers Convention Center. Through the City's 1% for the Arts program which acquires artwork for certain capital improvement projects, the Commission selected, and City Council approved, a monumental stainless steel sculpture and water feature for the building. The sculpture is being created by Colorado Springs artist Ivan Kosta, a sculptor who participated in the 1991 Art on the Corner exhibit.

The Commission conducted a competition for art throughout Colorado. Twenty-eight artists, including six from the Grand Junction area, offered 54 possible sculptures. From this multitude of options, the large contemporary brushed stainless steel sculpture and water feature by Kosta entitled "The Song of Two Rivers" emerged as the top choice. The sculpture is being built by the artist over the winter and will be installed in May.

Also for Two Rivers, the Commission purchased a large watercolor by local artist Gerald

Support went to numerous festivals including:

- Cinco de Mayo Fiesta
- Rocky Mountain Indian Festival
- Celtic Festival & Highland Games
- Jaycees Renaissance Festival
- VSA Arts-GJ Arts Festival for those with developmental disabilities
- Mesa State College Dance Festival
- Festival Italiano

Performances receiving funding were:

- Saturday Cinema at the Avalon

Fritzler, which hangs near the entrance.

A new sculpture was purchased and installed for the City's traffic engineering building on River Road, "Wire Jamb II", a metal sculpture by local artist David Berry. The sculpture was created from a huge 2½" diameter steel bolt, bent into a fluid curving shape. It was in the first Art on the Corner exhibit.

Rotating art exhibits began at the City Hall, with the help of a new City Hall Art Exhibit sub-committee. The exhibits feature artwork by many of the area's premier artists. The year culminated with an exhibit of oil paintings by the late Tom Stubbs, prints by Charles Hardy, ceramic vases by Terry Shepherd, and a bronze pelican by Scott Shaffer. Other artists who displayed their artwork included Gordon Brown, Tricia Berg, Jac Kephart, Marilyn Wounded Head, Gerald Fritzler, and Dave Davis.

The current City Hall exhibit includes tapestries by Kathy Spoering, watercolors by Arlene Ruggeri, life-sized sculptures by George Turner, and photographs by the Thunder Mt. Camera Club.

Arts Expo & Cultural Tour Promotes the Arts

- "Rainforest" by David Taylor Dance Theatre (from Denver)
- "Ruthless" by the Performing Arts Conservatory
- Schumann Singers Winter Concert
- GJ Music Teachers Sonatina Festival
- "LIVE! at the Library" readings
- Mesa County Community Concert Association's school concert of Andean folk music

The 4th annual Arts Expo & Cultural Tour showcased Grand Valley arts and cultural organizations, clubs, activities, programs, and artists.



Wulf Outdoor Photography exhibit booth

The exhibits, performances, demonstrations, and hands-on activities gave the 1000 participants and attendees a chance to meet local artists and volunteers, commission artwork, see what's available in dance and art classes, find out about cultural organizations, and enjoy an array of live entertainment.



Italian Cultural Society exhibit booth

The Cultural Tour part of the event provided reduced admission fees – only \$1 per person - at all area cultural facilities that same day,

including the Art Center, the Museum of Western Colorado, Dinosaur Journey in Fruita, the DooZoo Children's Museum, and the Botanic Gardens.

2001 Business in the Arts Awards

Congratulations to this year's winners of the annual Business in the Arts Awards: Alpine Bank in the Corporate Business category, and Planet Earth & the 4 Directions Gallery in the Small Business category. Alpine Bank was nominated by the Grand Junction Musical Arts Association for being, as Symphony Manager Cindy Rhodes says, "a community leader in supporting numerous non-profit organizations and community efforts and events."

Planet Earth & the 4 Directions Gallery, owned and operated by entrepreneur and artist Caole Lowry, was nominated by Alice Rupp. "Caole Lowry," Rupp states, "has opened a huge window of opportunity for local artists by allowing all degrees of skills and talent an equal opportunity to show their work."

Two large ceramic vases by potter Terry Shepherd were selected as the awards for the two business winners. Also nominated for the award was the Bank of Colorado.

Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts

The Commission nominated Don Meyers, former head of the Mesa State College Art Department, for the annual Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts, and Meyers was chosen one of three winners statewide. As an artist, arts educator, and tireless volunteer in many arts endeavors, Don has had a significant impact on the Grand Junction arts community and many local and national artists.

Don began teaching at the college in 1962 and was art department chairman from 1974 until his retirement in 1990. In addition to teaching, and creating his own artwork - mainly sculpture - Don has also been very active in the Art Center, serving on the Board of Trustees for several terms over three decades. His commitment and involvement in the Center greatly shaped that organization's success.

The Commission is hosting a reception at the Art Center in Don's honor February 22. The actual award ceremony will be in Denver March 14 with Governor Owens presenting the awards.

Statewide Collaborations

Commission member Karen Kiefer continues to serve on the board of the Colorado Arts Consortium, a state association of art councils and commissions. CAC held its annual state conference in Montrose in

September, and Arts Commission members helped organize, make presentations, and staff the conference.

Cultural Arts Coordinator Allison Sarmo continues to be a Peer Assistance Network advisor for the Colorado Council on the Arts. Last year she assisted Historic Montrose Downtown start a new public art program through the peer network.

State of the Arts in the Grand Valley

News from Other Arts & Cultural Organizations

Museum of Western Colorado

Curator of History David Bailey has been in the news extensively this past year with his research into the theory that Alferd Packer was innocent of the murder of several of his traveling companions (although not of cannibalism). Bailey was in Lake City in the fall to film a television special for the Travel Channel at the site where five members of Packer's illfated party were murdered. He has been interviewed by the local, national, and international news media and just completed a book about Packer which is being published under the auspices of Colorado photographer and environmentalist John Fielder.

Curator of Archives/Librarian Judy Prosser-Armstrong and her dedicated volunteers have been hard at work updating, organizing, and cataloguing the many history and genealogy resources in the Museum's Loyd Files Research Library. The library recently received a grant to purchase a microfilm/microfiche reader, and is also putting information and its catalogue of materials online. Researchers from across the state and country regularly access the Museum's comprehensive stores of information, photographs, books, local newspapers, and videos.

The Museum decided not to do the Labor Day weekend Pride of the Valley Festival of the Arts, which they began two years ago, in favor of expanding the annual October Apple Jubilee at Cross Orchards Historic Farm. About 3000 people attended Apple Jubilee with its historic demonstrations, artisan vendors, live entertainment, and family fun.

Besides its excellent library and archives, its History Museum at Fifth and Ute, the Cross Orchards History Farm, and Dinosaur Journey Museum in Fruita, the Museum also offers numerous classes, summer camps for kids, various history and travel lecture series, summer dinosaur digs, genealogy trips, Western Colorado history tours hosted by Dave Fishell, art exhibits in Whitman Education Center, the Mesa County Oral History Project, and the annual Reenactors' Days event for school children. The Museum has 1050 members. Admission to Museum facilities is free the second Wednesday of every month for Mesa County residents.

Art Center

The Art Center greatly expanded its permanent collection last year with artwork by contemporary local and regional artists. A full-sized, full-color book was published last spring showcasing the newly acquired works with 60 four-color reproductions. The Center hosted a hugely successful third annual Fine Art Auction in February, featuring work mainly by local artists. Regular annual exhibits were done by several area organizations, including: The Western Colorado Watercolor Society, the Brush & Palette Club, the Pastel Society of Colorado, the Outsiders, Altrusa Club's student exhibit, Mesa State College's student exhibit, the PTA Reflections student exhibit, and the Center's own student exhibit and members show. The Center branched out into installation art exhibits with not one but three installations in March, July, and August.

The Western Colorado Watercolor Society sponsors the only national exhibition at the Center every October, bringing together high quality art by 100 watermedia artists from all over the United States. The show has grown so extensive that the Watercolor Society hired a coordinator to organize the 2001 exhibit. Unfortunately for the Art Center and Grand Junction, the Society has decided it is unable to do the national exhibit again until April, 2003.

Two excellent and comprehensive retrospective shows were displayed, featuring artwork by renowned Western Colorado painters: Muralist Frank Mechau (1904 – 1946) in May, and Gerald Fritzler in September. Abstract art reigned in the annual “Contemporary Colorado” invitational exhibit. Art classes of all kinds bring many people into the Center every month. The Art Center has approximately 800 members, and offers free admission every Tuesday.

Performing Arts Conservatory

continues to offer an excellent season of live theater performances, music theater classes, and their January school tour of an original curriculum-based play.

The Art Center and the Performing Arts Conservatory are actively working toward building a new facility for exhibits, performances, and classes sometime in the near future.

Western Colorado Botanical Gardens

In 2001 the Botanical Gardens built a new outdoor amphitheater behind the butterfly house and a castle in the Children’s Garden, plus the Botanical Society got a new Executive Director, former Volunteer Coordinator Lorna Naegele. The Gardens inaugurated the Elizabeth Harris Amphitheater last July with an evening of performing arts entertainment. The event coincided with the dedication of Mindy’s Sensory Gardens and the Pomrenke Children’s Library. Work on the native garden, the sensory garden, and the children’s garden continues.

Italian Cultural Society members planted and tended an Italian vegetable garden, and there was also an African/American garden plot last summer. The Grand Valley Rose Society held its first annual rose show at the garden in June, and the Botanical Society sponsored its tenth annual tour of local gardens in July. The Botanic Gardens has approximately 900 members, and is free the first Sunday of each month.

NOTE . . . The number of members of most major arts and cultural organizations has remained relatively steady since the mid-90’s; however, the overall number of events, classes, programs, productions, as well as the attendance at cultural activities has definitely increased.

Grand Junction Musical Arts Association/Grand Junction Symphony

The GJ Symphony is in the middle of its 24th season, presenting all female guest artists this year. The symphony orchestra gives six regular concerts and four special concerts annually. Even without owning and operating its own facility like other major cultural organizations, the Musical Arts Association is one of the largest arts organizations in Grand Junction. The symphony has 1160 season ticket holders.

KAFM Grand Valley Public Radio

KAFM radio station recently moved into a new home the end of 2001, purchasing the former Paradise Restaurant building on Ute Avenue and transforming the second floor into offices and a radio station facility. Plans are to have a small performance space on the first floor suitable for intimate concerts and other events. KAFM has about 1000 members and all of its on air programming is done by volunteers.

After only three years in operation, KAFM has become a mainstay in the community. The station takes its mission as a community radio station very seriously, and works hard to publicize cultural events and local arts and cultural organizations and artists.

DooZoo Children’s Museum

The DooZoo also moved into a new permanent home at 421 Colorado Avenue in March. The hands-on kids’ museum had been sharing a temporary, donated building with Partners, but both had to make way for hotel parking lot construction.

Saturday Cinema at the Avalon Films

This new monthly series of independent and foreign films began in January 2001, and had such a successful first year that they just hired a paid executive director, Diana Robertson Woods. Films are shown the second Saturday of each month at the Avalon.

Two New Art Galleries Open

As evidence of increased community cultural activity, downtown Grand Junction is now home to two new fine art galleries, Horsethief Canyon Gallery, 454 Main, which opened last June, and Artworks, 102 N. 5th, which just opened the beginning of 2002. Both feature original artwork and sell work by area artists, in addition to other artists. The two new galleries join four existing downtown galleries selling original art, including Frame Works, Working Artists Studio, Planet Earth & the 4 Directions Gallery, and Hang Ups.