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Greetings from the Executive Director

New Mexico Arts Mission

A division of the Department of Cultural Affairs

ARTSPEAK

P.O. Box 1450
Santa Fe, NM 87504-1450

ARTS COMMISSIONERS

Charmay Allred, Santa Fe
Bob Cooper, Santa Fe
Karen Cotter, Albuquerque
Glenn Cutter, Mesilla
Sherry Davis, Santa Fe
Herb Denish, Albuquerque
Jim Enote, Zuni
Christine Glidden, Albuquerque
JoAnn Huff, Albuquerque
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Ann Silver, Santa Fe
Janice Spence, Hobbs

www.nmarts.org

Winter 2009

NEW MEXICO ARTS | A division of the Department of Cultural Affairs
Greetings from the Executive Director

These are challenging times for all of us working in the arts due to the economic recession and state budget shortfall. But with challenge comes opportunity and hopefully we will all emerge stronger and more innovative.

As our New Mexico Arts Commission Chair Janice Spencer noted during our November commission meeting in Hobbs, no one does their best work when times are easy. We know these are uncertain times and we are very concerned about the health and sustainability of our arts groups across our state – and we want to help.

Even though New Mexico is not facing the dire budget situation of some other states, we had to cut our budget for the current fiscal year by 5 percent, as did all state agencies as ordered by Governor Richardson. And we have been informed that more cuts are possible.

The grim budget climate means we may need to play defense rather than offense in the upcoming legislative session that begins January 20 in Santa Fe.

However, I do think it is critical that we continue to make the case that funding for the arts needs to be increased, not decreased.

And I am very pleased to report that the legislature’s interim Economic and Rural Development Committee endorsed a bill at their November 12 meeting to increase our grants budget by $900,000, which would essentially double it.

The effort to increase our grants budget is being spearheaded by the New Mexico Community Arts Network, an umbrella organization for local arts councils across our state, and I want to thank all who are involved in this campaign.

So even though these are challenging times, it is important that we continue to let our state legislators know the importance of increasing our grants budget at New Mexico Arts and how this would benefit arts organizations across our state and improve the quality of life for New Mexicans. But we also need to be prepared to mount a strong defense in the face of potentially even greater budget cuts.

Please be sure to let your state legislators know what you could do if your arts grant from New Mexico Arts was doubled and what kind of a difference increased arts funding would make in your community.

To not only survive but flourish in this economic climate may require new ways of doing business. We need to be willing to change and to pursue more partnerships. We’re interested in hearing from our artists and arts groups as to what type of technical assistance we should provide in the coming months that would be most valuable to help you weather this economic storm.

Another priority for New Mexico Arts during the 2009 legislative session will be to seek a new permanent full-time staff position for a program manager to oversee our Arts Trails program, designed to put New Mexico artists on the map and bring the market to them. We need a staff position devoted solely to this project to ensure development of additional Arts Trails across our state and to keep alive our pilot New Mexico Fiber Arts Trails.

We are continuing to work with the state Economic Development Department’s MainStreet program and other partners to develop Arts and Cultural Districts across New Mexico. We expect to authorize a second round of Arts and Cultural Districts early this year as well as get progress reports from our pilot programs in Silver City and Las Vegas.

I’m pleased to welcome Jenice Gharib to New Mexico Arts as our new program coordinator in charge of arts education, local arts councils, statewide service organizations, and arts in social service grant categories.

Jenice, who has an extensive background in arts administration, is very familiar with our arts grants program, having worked with several of our grantees. Jenice also manages our Poetry Out Loud program, which we conduct in New Mexico on behalf of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Our fourth annual state finals for the Poetry Out Loud national recitation contest for high school students will be held February 8 at 1 p.m. in St. Francis Auditorium at the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe. Please come and watch our talented students compete. The winner will represent New Mexico as our state finalist in the Poetry Out Loud national championship in April in Washington DC.

I would like to express my condolences to the family of Alice King, our former first lady and children’s champion, who died in December. Alice King was also a wonderful champion of the arts and our annual Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts, New Mexico’s most prestigious arts awards, were started in 1974 by Alice and then-Governor Bruce King. She will be missed.

Loie Fecteau Executive Director
loie.fecteau@state.nm.us
Nominations Sought for Annual Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts

The New Mexico Arts Commission and New Mexico Arts, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, are now accepting nominations for the 2009 Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts. Nominations for the Governor’s Awards must include individual living artists working in any discipline who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in the arts; individual non-artists who have made significant or distinguished contributions to the arts in New Mexico; and businesses, nonprofits, or foundations with sustained involvement in and support for the arts. Nominations can be submitted by individual New Mexico residents or representatives of businesses or organizations in New Mexico.

Nominations must be postmarked by March 6, 2009. Nominations may also be hand-delivered to New Mexico Arts offices no later than March 6 by 5 p.m. Nomination forms are available online at www.nmarts.org/awards. For more information, contact New Mexico Arts at 505/827-6490, 800/879-4278 (statewide), or email virginia.castellano@state.nm.us.

MONSTERS IN THE ROCKS: THE HERO TWINS OF THE NAVAJO CREATION STORY

Claude Stephenson, Folk Arts Coordinator

In their own story of how the five-fingered people became the Dine, or Navajo as the Bilagáana (white men) call them, the world was populated with fierce monsters (Náayéé) that chased and devoured the people almost to extinction. In desperation, First Man surrounded himself with song for protection and followed a vision to a mountain covered in clouds where he was given a figurine, carved of turquoise, and asked to care for it as his own baby. He was told to bring it back to the mountain in twelve days, which he did.

On the mountain, the gods added another figurine of white shell to the turquoise one and brought both figurines to life. One became Changing Woman and the other became White Shell Woman. One day, when they had reached maidenhood, Changing Woman was impregnated by the Sun, and White Shell Woman by water. They bore one who became known as the Hero Twins. In some versions of the story, Changing Woman bore them both, but no matter: their heroic deeds remain the same.

When they had reached adulthood, the Hero Twins departed on a quest to rid the world of all monsters. The story is long and their exploits are too numerous to be related in this short article, but the story has many highlights.

The Hero Twins first set out to meet their father, the Sun. On the way, they met Spider Woman, who gave them talismans, chants, and magical weapons to allow them to traverse the treacherous holy path to the house of the Sun. There were valleys of reeds and valleys of space that came to life and tried to rip their backs to shreds, but the Hero Twins prevailed. There were cliffs that opened up as paths only to close like vises after they eloquently pleaded their cases and convinced Monster Slayer of their usefulness to the peace, prosperity, and well-being of the Dine.

Thinking that their work was done, the Hero Twins finally gave up monster slaying and retired to a peaceful life of raising a family. However, other monsters that were unknown or missed by Monster Slayer continued to haunt the landscape that is the land of the Dine to this day. Pieces of bones and claws of the monsters that were slain still reside in the rock formations across the Navajo topography. Rock formations that are simply striking and majestic to the Bilagáana are often sacred sites to the Dine, as in “that place where Monster Slayer killed Kicking Monster, who kicks people off cliffs.”

Today, Cliffs That Swallow People can be seen on the way to Standing Rock, near Crownpoint, and near Tuba City, near Big Mountain. There are many other silent rock spires strown across the desolate stretches of the lands of the Dine, and each has a place in the stories of the people who live in this remote and stark region. In traveling through this remarkable and visually stunning corner of our world, those who know the history of the people who live here cannot help but sense the eerie yet vibrant life beneath the deadly silence that pervades the quiet rock masses dominating the horizon.

Cabezon Peak, northwest New Mexico.
New Mexico Arts uses the CaFÉ™ online application and selection process at http://www.callforentry.org. There is no application fee to apply for the project or to create an account on the system. All materials must be submitted according to the specifications outlined on the CaFÉ™ website.

**Prospectus #198 - New Mexico Court of Appeals Commission Project**

**Deadline: Midnight, Thursday, March 12, 2009**

New Mexico Arts and the New Mexico Court of Appeals seek to commission an artwork for the new Court of Appeals Building in New Mexico. This includes all fees and expenses: materials, equipment costs, fees, labor, insurance, taxes, travel, installation, project plaque, and written and photographic documentation of the completed project. Three to five finalists will be invited to submit a formal proposal for the project.

The Art in Public Places program uses the CaFÉ™ online application and selection process at http://www.callforentry.org. There is no application fee to apply for the project or to create an account on the system. All materials must be submitted according to the specifications outlined on the CaFÉ™ website.

**Poetry Out Loud**

On Sunday, February 8 at 1 p.m., New Mexico Arts presents the state finals of the Poetry Out Loud national recitation contest. Poetry Out Loud invites the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theater into the English class. This exciting program, which began in 2005, helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

High school students from around the state will compete and the winner will represent New Mexico in the national finals in Washington DC April 26-28. Participating schools are Carlsbad High School, Clovis High School, Deming Casa Chavez Charter High School, Deming High School, Oñate High School, Santa Fe Indian School, Southwest Learning Center, Vista Grande Charter School, and Waldo High Charter School.

The winner will receive $100 plus an expense-paid trip with chaperone to Washington DC for the national finals competition. The winner’s school will receive $1500 to purchase poetry books for the school library. The runner-up will receive $100 and his or her school will receive $200 for the school library. All other finalists will receive a gift bag provided by local individuals and organizations. Judges for the 2009 New Mexico finals are Gene Case, Tom Forrest, Valerie Martinez, and Debbie Brody (accuracy judge).

The finals will be held at the St. Francis Auditorium of the New Mexico Museum of Art in downtown Santa Fe (107 E. Palace Avenue). Admission is free.

Poetry Out Loud is a project of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. Lorraine Schlochter is the New Mexico coordinator for the program. For more information, contact Jenice Gharib, New Mexico Arts, 505/827-6490, 800/879-4278 (statewide), or email JeniceG@nmarts.org.

**Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Art and Leadership Program Receives Coming Up Taller Award**

The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum was given a Coming Up Taller Award in a November ceremony held at the White House. The museum was honored for its innovative gender-based Art and Leadership Program designed to promote the creativity of children through a variety of multidisciplinary arts activities, including visual and literary arts. The year-round program, which is tuition-free, partners with area public and private schools and includes an annual Summer Intensive. It fosters the development of leadership skills in participants, builds confidence, and encourages goal-setting. The Art and Leadership program has received national recognition and has been used as a model for programs in other communities.

Coming Up Taller is an initiative of the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH), Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The program highlights outstanding arts and humanities programs for children.

**Fourth annual TIME exhibit was held in Carlsbad, October 25 to December 5, 2008**

New Mexico Arts partnered with Carlsbad MainStreet to present the fourth annual TIME (Temporary Installations Made for the Environment) exhibit in Carlsbad October 25 to December 5, 2008. New Mexico artists throughout the state were invited to create temporary environmental artworks based on the theme: Nine artworks were exhibited in downtown Carlsbad, at the Halagueno Arts Park (Carlsbad Museum and Art Center, and Carlsbad Public Library) and Eddy County Courthouse. The artworks were displayed for six weeks and, at the end of the exhibition, were disassembled and removed, leaving no trace of ever having existed.

TIME was inspired by the emerging public art trend to encourage artists interested in creating more spontaneous and immediate artworks with short life spans. New Mexico Arts hopes this kind of project will engage both community artists and artists in the public art practice.

This year’s participating TIME artists were Cecilia Stanford, Donna Barnitz and Colloc Kenzetti, Linda Brewer, Lisa Rubin, Cordelia Ross, Michael Orgel and Arthur Rosenberg, Paula Castillo, Luz Wolfe and Steven Schelchen, and Becky Holzman.

If you would like to learn more about TIME, please visit the exhibit’s website at http://www.callforentry.org. If your community would like to host a TIME exhibit, please contact New Mexico Arts at 505/827-6490. We will provide more information at least two months’ notice for a proposed event.
Featured Work at TIME Carlsbad

1. Heaven on Earth – Cecilia Stanford
   The work was a physical statement on the concept of Heaven and Earth. The piece was comprised of pavers that were covered with mirrored mosaic and laid on the ground in a meandering path. The pavers were clustered into cloud-like shapes to reflect the sky.

2. Untitled – Donna Branitz/Colleen Konetsni
   The piece was an installation of painted pavers, each with features similar to a wind chime. The flags included images of the New Mexico sky and Guadalupe Mountains visible from Carlsbad.

3. Stargazer Op – Linda Brewer
   Major constellations visible from Carlsbad in November were the focal point of the installation. The piece was an installation of painted flags, each with features similar to a wind chime. The flags included images of the New Mexico sky and Guadalupe Mountains visible from Carlsbad.

4. Star Walk – Lisa Rubin
   The work was a physical statement created a star map to identify the stars, planets, and constellations over Carlsbad. The goal of the work was to make astronomy accessible to everyone and celebrate the beauty of New Mexico’s sky.

5. Sky Labyrinth – Cordelia Rose
   A labyrinth was created that the viewer’s eye to the sky. The work was made from bamboo, with a carved marble crescent representing the moon suspended from the apex. The structure of the pyramid drew the viewer’s eye to the sky. The work was walled with clear views to the sky.

6. Under the Rainbow – Zoe Wolfe and Steven Shelendich
   The work was a physical walkway referencing the arch of a rainbow. Viewers walked through the arch and experienced the color firsthand above and around them.

7. Blue Firmament – Paula Castillo
   The artists constructed a pyramid of LED lights. Viewers entered the labyrinth oriented at the meridian of the Southern Cross constellation and exited at the North Star Polaris. Visitors were encouraged to interact with the work as they walked the labyrinth.

8. Sky Labyrinth – Cordelia Rose
   A labyrinth was created that reflected the night sky on the ground, made of interlocking spirals of rock, clay bricks, and ropes of LED lights. Viewers entered the labyrinth oriented at the meridian of the Southern Cross constellation and exited at the North Star Polaris. Visitors were encouraged to interact with the work as they walked the labyrinth.

9. No Blue without Orange – Becky Holtzman
   Organically-created orange hoops were strung among low tree branches. The hoops were placed on branches with clear views to the sky. The sky provided the contrast to the orange circles in the trees. The work was made from branches and twigs, covered with bright vermillion papier-mâché, varnished with clear shellac, and connected with monofilament.

AIPP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prospectus #195: Eastern New Mexico University – Ruidoso Branch Community College
Receipt Deadline: Midnight, Thursday, February 26, 2009

New Mexico Arts and Eastern New Mexico University – Ruidoso Branch Community College (ENMU-Ruidoso) seek an artist or artist team to create a site-specific commission project at the newly renovated campus in Ruidoso. Professional artists currently residing in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah experienced in creating public-funded commission projects are invited to submit qualifications to this opportunity.

Project amount is $54,300. This includes all costs and expenses: materials, equipment costs, fees, labor, insurance, taxes, travel, installation, project plaque, and written and photographic documentation of the completed project. Up to three finalists will be invited to submit a formal proposal for the project.

New Mexico Arts uses the Call for Entries™ online application and selection process at http://www.callforentries.org. There is no application fee to apply for the project or to create an account on the system. All materials must be submitted according to the specifications outlined on the Call for Entries™ website.

Prospectus #197: San Juan College – Outdoor Learning Center
Receipt Deadline: Midnight, Thursday, April 16, 2009

New Mexico Arts and San Juan College seek an artist or artist team to create a site-specific commission project at the Outdoor Learning Center on the college’s main campus in Farmington. Upon completion, the college is expecting to receive Gold LEED certification for the site. Professional artists currently residing in the United States and experienced in creating public-funded commission projects are invited to submit qualifications to this opportunity.

Project amount is $341,905. This includes all costs and expenses: materials, equipment costs, fees, labor, insurance, taxes, travel, installation, project plaque, and written and photographic documentation of the completed project. Up to five finalists will be invited to submit a formal proposal for the project.
Featured Work at TIME Carlsbad

1. Heaven on Earth – Cecilia Stanford
   The work was a physical statement on the concept of Heaven and Earth. The piece was comprised of pavers that were covered with mirrored mosaic and laid on the ground in a meandering path. The pavers were clustered into cloud-like shapes to reflect the sky.

2. Untitled – Donna Branitz/Colleen Konetni
   The piece was an installation of painted flags, each with features similar to a wind chime. The flags included images of the New Mexico sky and Indianapolis Mountain visible from Carlsbad. The chime added another sensory layer to the installation.

3. Starpath Op – Linda Brewer
   Major constellations visible from Carlsbad in November were the focal point of the installation. The mixed-media work created a star map to identify the stars, planets, and constellations over Carlsbad. The goal of the work was to make astronomy accessible to everyone and celebrate the beauty of New Mexico’s sky.

4. Star Walk – Lisa Robin
   The work was a physical walkway through a constellation. Participants had the opportunity to interact with astronomy. The piece was a star map by day and mirror of the nighttime sky, with a series of solar lamps placed in the pattern of constellations visible in Carlsbad during the fall.

5. Sky Labyrinth – Cordelia Rose
   A labyrinth was created that reflected the night sky on the ground, made of interlocking spires of rock, clay bricks, and ropes of LED lights. Viewers entered the labyrinth oriented at the meridian of the Southern Cross constellation and exited at the North Star Polaris. Visitors were encouraged to interact with the work as they walked the labyrinth.

6. Untitled – Michael Orgel and Arthur Rosenberg
   The artists constructed a pyramid using multiple layers of twine-tied bamboo, with a carved marble crescent representing the moon suspended from the apex. The structure of the pyramid drew the viewer’s eye to the sky. The work was tied together without nails, screws, or glue, and all materials used were from the natural world.

7. Blue Permanent – Paula Castillo
   Castillo created an audio composition of digital recordings from a random selection of sounds.

8. Under the Rainbow – Zoe Wolfe and Steven Shelendich
   The work was a rainbow spectrum of woven fabric arches, each a solid color of nylon. The arches were arranged in a curve referencing the arch of a rainbow. Viewers walked through the arches and experienced the color firsthand above and around them.

9. No Blue without Orange – Becky Holtzman
   Organically-created orange hoops were strung among low tree branches. The hoops were placed on branches with clear views to the sky. The sky provided the contrast to the orange circles in the trees. The work was made from branches and twigs, covered with bright vermilion paper mâché, varnished with clear shellac, and connected with monofilament.

Under the Rainbow – Zoe Wolfe and Steven Shelendich
Colored nylon arches • Halaguanow Arts Park • TIME – Carlsbad.

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New Mexico Arts uses the CaFE™ online application and selection process at http://www.cafearts.org. There is no application fee to apply for the project or to create an account on the system. All materials must be submitted according to the specifications outlined on the CaFE™ website.

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Prospectus #198 - New Mexico Court of Appeals Commission Project

Deadline: Midnight, Thursday, March 12, 2009

New Mexico Arts and the New Mexico Court of Appeals seek to commission an artwork for the new Court of Appeals Building in Albuquerque. The committee is interested in a contemporary artwork that abstractly expresses the ideals of the Court of Appeals. Professional artists currently residing in the United States and experienced in creating public-funded commission projects are invited to submit qualifications to this opportunity.

Project amount is $40,500. This includes all fees and expenses: materials, equipment costs, fees, labor, insurance, taxes, travel, installation, project plaque, and written and photographic documentation of the completed project. Three to five finalists will be invited to submit a formal proposal for the project. The Art in Public Places program uses the CaFÉ™ online application and selection process at http://www.callforentry.org. There is no application fee to apply for the project or to create an account on the system. All materials must be submitted according to the specifications outlined on the CaFE™ website.

Poetry Out Loud

On Sunday, February 8 at 1 p.m., New Mexico Arts presents the state finals of the Poetry Out Loud national recitation contest. Poetry Out Loud invites the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theater into the English class. This exciting program, which began in 2005, helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

High school students from around the state will compete and the winner will represent New Mexico in the national finals in Washington DC April 26-28. Participating schools are Carlsbad High School, Clovis High School, Deming Career Charter High School, Deming High School, Elate High School, Santa Fe Indian School, Southwest Learning Center, Vista Grande Charter School, and Waldo High Charter School.

The winner will receive $1,000 plus an expenses-paid trip with chaperone to Washington DC for the national finals competition. The winner’s school will receive $1,500 to purchase poetry books for the school library. The runner-up will receive $1,000 and his or her school will receive $200 for the school library. All other finalists will receive a gift bag provided by local individuals and organizations. Judges for the 2009 New Mexico Finals are Gene Caso, Tone Forrest, Valerie Martinez, and Dibble Bredy (accuracy judge).

The finals will be held at the St. Francis Auditorium of the New Mexico Museum of Art in downtown Santa Fe (107 E. Palace Avenue). Admission is free.

Poetry Out Loud is a project of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. Lorraine Schochler is the New Mexico coordinator for the program. For more information, contact Jenice Gharib, New Mexico Arts, 505/827-6490, 800/879-4278 (statewide), or email Jenice.Gharib@state.nm.us.

Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Art and Leadership Program Receives Coming Up Taller Award

The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum was given a Coming Up Taller Award in a November ceremony held at the White House. The museum was honored for its innovative gender-based Art and Leadership Program designed to promote the creativity of children through a variety of multidisciplinary arts activities, including visual and literary arts. The year-round program, which is tuition-free, partners with area public and private schools and includes an annual Summer Intensive. It fosters the development of leadership skills in participants, builds confidence, and encourages goal-setting. The Art and Leadership program has received national recognition and has been used as a model for programs in other communities.

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TIME was inspired by the emerging public art trend to encourage artists interested in creating more spontaneous and immediate artworks with short life spans. New Mexico Arts hopes this kind of project will engage both communities and artists in the public art process.

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If your community would like to host a TIME exhibit, please contact New Mexico Arts at 505/827-6490. Please give us at least twelve-months’ notice for a proposed event.
Nominations Sought for Annual Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts

The New Mexico Arts Commission and New Mexico Arts, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, are now accepting nominations for the 2009 Governor’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts. Nominations for the Governor’s Awards must include individual living artists working in any discipline who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in the arts; individual non-artists who have made significant or distinguished contributions to the arts in New Mexico; and businesses, nonprofits, or foundations with sustained involvement in and support for the arts. Nominations can be submitted by individual New Mexico residents or representatives of businesses or organizations in New Mexico.

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MONSTERS IN THE ROCKS: THE HERO TWINS OF THE NAVAJO CREATION STORY

Claude Stephenson, Folk Arts Coordinator

In their own story of how the five-fingered people became the Diné, or Navajo as the Bilagáana (white men) call them, the world was populated with fierce monsters (Nayááʼeyí) that chased and devoured the people almost to extinction. In desperation, First Man surrounded himself with song for protection and followed a vision to a mountain covered in clouds where he was given a figurine, carved of turquoise, and asked to care for it as his own baby. He was told to bring it back to the mountain in twelve days, which he did.

On the mountain, the gods added another figurine of white shell to the turquoise one and brought both figurines to life. One became Changing Woman and the other became White Shell Woman. One day, when they had reached maidenhood, Changing Woman was impregnated by the Sun, and White Shell Woman by water. They bore one who became known as the Hero Twins. In some versions of the story, Changing Woman bore them both, but in another, their heroic deeds remain the same.

When they had reached adulthood, the Hero Twins departed on a quest to rid the world of all monsters. The story is long and its exploits are too numerous to be related in this short article, but the story has many highlights.

The Hero Twins first set out to meet their father, the Sun. On the way, they met Spider Woman, who gave them talismans, chants, and magical weapons to allow them to traverse the treacherous holy path to the house of the Sun. There were valleys of reeds and valleys of cacti that came to life and tried to rip their flesh to shreds, but the Hero Twins prevailed. There were cliffs that opened up as they passed only to close like vise on them, and yet they tricked and enchanted these rocks into free passage. At the house of their father the Sun, they were given supernatural weapons to aid them in slaying the monsters they sought.

In the Hero Twins’ first quest, they pursued the most formidable of monsters, Ye’iitsoh, the Big Giant. After he drank up the waters of a lake, they confronted him and challenged him with taunts. In the ensuing battle, they subdued him and chopped off his head and cast it far away where it can still be seen today. Some say it is in the tall volcanic rock now known as Cabezon, or big head, which rises about thirty miles west of San Isidro in the Ru Puerco Valley. Other versions place it as a boulder close to Mt. Taylor.

Monster Slayer is the lead hero of the saga and often tackled the monsters alone while his brother stayed behind to protect their mothers. He destroyed many monsters but allowed others to live. Some he changed into useful creatures, such as eagle and owl. Others were killed outright. Some monsters, such as age, hunger, and poverty, were allowed to live after they eloquently pleaded their cases and convinced Monster Slayer of their usefulness to the peace, prosperity, and well-being of the Diné.

Thinking that their work was done, the Hero Twins finally gave up monster slaying and retired to a peaceful life of raising a family. However, other monsters that were unknown or missed by Monster Slayer continued to haunt the landscape that is the land of the Diné to this day. Pieces of bones and claws of the monsters that were slain remain in the rock formations scattered across the Navajo topography. Rock formations that are simply striking and majestic to the Bilagáana are often sacred sites to the Diné, as in “that place where Monster Slayer killed Kicking Monster, who kicks people off cliffs.”

Today, Cliffs That Swallow People can be seen on the way to Standing Rock, near Crownpoint. There are many other silent rock spires strewn across the desolate stretches of the lands of the Diné, and each has a place in the stories of the people who live in this remote and stark region. In traveling through this remarkable and visually stunning corner of our world, those who know the history of the people who live here cannot help but sense the eerie yet vibrant life beneath the deadly silence that pervades the quiet rock masses dominating the horizon.

Cabezon Peak, northwest New Mexico.