

ARTS & CULTURE.

The world recognizes New Mexico because of its unique and diverse arts and culture. McKinley County has a long and rich creative tradition that flourishes today with an estimated 17,500 artisans producing such famous works as jewelry, rugs and textiles, paintings, furniture, kachinas, and pottery. Some honor centuries-old Indian or Spanish traditional forms while others produce Southwest Style or thoroughly contemporary art.

The World Buys From Gallup. Gallup, NM has long regarded itself as the “Indian Jewelry Capitol of the World”. It is said that over 80% of the Native American jewelry sold today passes from the reservations through the Gallup area to regional, national, and international markets.

Economic Impact. In 2005, a review was compiled by the Northwest NM Council of Governments on the economic impact of the “Arts & Culture” cluster in McKinley County. Based on a group of businesses by NAICS codes, this cluster is responsible for about 1,200 jobs and over \$5,000,000 in wages, annually. In addition, there are many more home-based businesses doing weaving, pottery and silver work. The review suggests that about 22% of McKinley County’s total economy is based on the “Arts & Culture” cluster.

A Tradition of Trading Posts. McKinley County is home to many of the remaining and still functioning trading posts in the world. Stepping into one, draws on memories of times before banks and before currency. The trading posts are still an integral part of life in McKinley County, and still are an ideal place to shop for authentic works.

Trends in the Industry. The arts and crafts industry continues to evolve in a global marketplace, and has several opportunities and challenges:

- **Authenticity.** This is a major issue that vilifies the integrity of area artisans. From sellers misrepresenting works as “Indian made” to replicas entering the market from other countries, the issue is growing. The customer must be aware of these issues, and understand that usually you get what you pay for – if costs next to nothing, its probably not real. Also, buy works from reputable merchants and/or directly from the artisan.
- **Internet.** The Internet has transformed the way business is done. Many of the area artists are moving to the Internet to connect with new markets or using online sites like ebay.com to sell products. One example of an online store is run by Navajo Arts & Crafts Enterprise, which sells Navajo fine jewelry and collectibles. Go to: www.gonavajo.com
- **Buying Direct.** Another trend that is growing in momentum, not just in the arts world, but also in lots of specialty markets is the concept of fair trade and buying direct. Many area artisans are opening their workshops to tourists and



potential buyers to see and appreciate the work that goes into their craft and also the value. Artisans also sell at co-ops, Southwestern art shows, and local events like the Gallup Inter-Tribal Ceremonial festival.

- **Ancient Way Arts Trail.** Based on this trend, a partnership project emerged through the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments, New Mexico Arts, Tom Kennedy, and area artisans called the "Ancient Way Arts Trail". A driving trail of networked artisans, co-ops, trading posts, and cultural enterprise sites that links cultures as varied as Navajo, Zuni, Hispanic, Anglo, and Mormon to reveal the rich, complex character of this special place through artistry as recent as today or as ancient as history itself. The sites along the trail include 27 participating art sites and represent more than 650 superior artists.

For more information go to: <http://www.ancientwayartstrail.com>

Other Highlighted Projects:

WPA Arts Collection. The City of Gallup and McKinley County is home to one of largest collections of WPA "New Deal" artwork in the county. The McKinley County Fine Arts Committee has been diligently working to restore and preserve this national treasure. Under the Federal Arts Program, New Deal planners designated Gallup home to one of New Mexico's four Federal Art Centers. The Gallup center offered art classes, organized and displayed exhibitions, and contributed to the Index of American Design. New Deal paintings that once hung in Gallup's post office were given to the General Services Administration, and a mural in the armory may have been painted over. But some 60 to 70 works of art and craft remain in three Gallup collections:

- The city's Octavia Fellin Public Library accommodates 21 pieces of New Deal art and several Spanish colonial furniture pieces from the era.
- The McKinley County Courthouse, itself a New Deal arts project, houses 19 pieces of New Deal art, and murals, tile work, lamps, and furniture by New Deal artists and crafts workers grace the courthouse's interior.
- The Gallup-McKinley School District has three paintings (and might have had several prints that are no longer inventoried).



The work in these collections reflect the spirit and sense of place that still define New Mexico for the rest of the world seven decades later. An online catalogue of the County's WPA art collection and more information is available at:

<http://www.mckinleycountyart.org/>



Gallup Downtown Mural Collection. In the spirit of ongoing support for the arts, Gallup's civic leaders began an initiative to create a series of Downtown murals that depict Gallup Life and the various historic events and diverse cultures of the region. An entire series of contemporary murals, all painted by local artists. Mural sites on eight publicly and privately owned buildings were selected for their locations and visibility. (**Also, the Historic Gallup Events Plaque Walking Tour** starts at the Depot Station.)

While they are certainly large enough to be impressive and well detailed, they do not seek to intimidate or overpower the viewer with their respective sizes, but to use the space to communicate their messages. Indicating the expertise of their creators, the meticulously rendered paintings are likewise able to display a brilliant range of colors without appearing garish. What may be more impressive than the variety of viewpoints and techniques or the sheer visual enjoyment of the images are the painstaking depictions of the stories that the muralists tell.

If you would like more detailed information on each of the murals, the Gallup Chamber of Commerce located on the north side of Route 66 between 1st and 2nd street, has free brochures that go into more detail on each mural.



Trail of the Ancients Byway.



The Trail of the Ancients – New Mexico is 665 miles of roadway that takes the visitor through some of the oldest inhabited parts of New Mexico. This trail includes the Northwest portion of the state, including San Juan, McKinley, and Cibola counties, as well as, it connects to its sister "Trail of the Ancients" byways in AZ, CO, and UT. The Trail of the Ancients may be the most historically significant in New Mexico, having been in continuous use since around 900 A.D. The Trail exposes visitors to exploration routes and settlements by Pueblo, Navajo, and Spanish peoples.

The Ancient Way Arts Trail represents the southern portion of this massive byway with a diversity of cultural and archaeological sites.

A map of the entire byway is available for download on the Maps & Resources section.

Highlighted Art Cooperative:

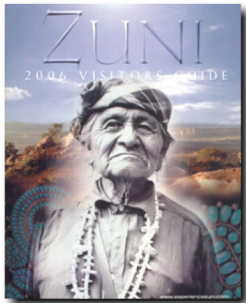


Native Hands Co-op. Native Hands Co-op is a project under the Catholic Charities of Gallup. The Cooperative provides new and innovative services designed to change a systemic problem of economic exploitation of Native American artisans living in Northwest New Mexico and Northeast Arizona. The program is structured to serve the many local Native Americans who desire to increase their independence by developing their artistic, educational and entrepreneurial capabilities. Native Hands Co-op provides an online store as well as a physical gallery at 506 W. Hwy 66 in Gallup, New Mexico. For more information, check out: <http://nativehandscoop.com/>

Additional Information:



Navajo Nation Tourism: <http://discovernavajo.com/>



Pueblo of Zuni Tourism: <http://www.zunitourism.com/>

