



FILE PHOTOS

This is a straw appliqué of a Rio Grande Vallero blanket by Della Ulibarri, one of the more than 100 artists expected to be at the 22nd annual Winter Spanish Market in early December.

Della Ulibarri works on a straw appliqué cross at her Santa Fe home.



WINTER SPANISH MARKET

WHEN: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Dec. 4 and 5

WHERE: Santa Fe
Community Convention
Center, 201 W. Marcy St.

HOW MUCH: Free

INFORMATION:
505-982-2226 or
spanishcolonial.org

Winter Spanish Market explores artistic boundaries

Participants can depart from tradition

By **DONNA OLNSTEAD**
For the Journal

Art that explores the boundaries of the Spanish Colonial period will be available at the juried 22nd annual Winter Spanish Market in December.

While the summer Spanish Market focuses on traditional New Mexico art forms done with traditional techniques, the winter market offers artists an opportunity to show some of the natural evolution of their craft, says Ralph Sena, an award-winning jeweler and metal sculptor.

"Techniques in jewelry and blacksmithing have dramatically changed in the past 200 years. They've changed dramatically in the past 10 years. For some of the crafts, the technology is almost unbelievable," says Sena, a longtime exhibitor in the summer and winter Spanish markets.

For example, Sena can make intricately designed postage stamp-size images that fit on his knife blades with iron powder forging techniques, a science unavailable to his New Mexican ancestors.

"Jewelry making has also changed dramatically from the jeweler who would go from place to place making a filigree piece for a wedding or other special event," he explains.

"People who make a living at their craft are always exploring new methods," says Sena, who lives in the village of Bosque, south of Belen.

"The winter market is neat because it allows us to explore new techniques. People will be seeing art we aren't allowed to show during the summer market."

For the versatile Sena, that means his knives, fireplace tools, spurs and jewelry. His prices range from \$10 to thousands of dollars.

"When people ask me how long it takes to make a piece, I always tell them 54 years. That's how long I've been doing this and all that experience goes into every piece," says Sena.

For Sena, showing his work at the summer and winter markets is especially gratifying because he gets to see the pleasure his art gives to people.

"The joy is to watch someone take pleasure from your work. I love to see that look of satisfaction on customers' faces. It's a joy," he says.

Unique presentation

It is that blend of tradition and innovation, which organizers call "contemporary expressions," that makes Winter Spanish Market unique.

"Artists bring the influence of contemporary Hispanic life to their work and continue to reflect innovation within this tradition. This is a rare opportunity for visitors to enjoy a taste of New Mexico's vibrant Spanish culture, both past and present," say event organizers.

"The interactions between the artists and visitors are unique — it is not only learning about process, materials and subject matter, but gaining a sense of connection to the heritage inherent in the

art."

Award-winning straw appliqué artist Della Ulibarri, 48, originally from Truchas, says for her that means more of her weaving designs will appear at the market along with her more traditional crosses and Santuario de Chimayó images. She also uses some dyed straw in vivid colors that allows her weaving designs to seemingly pop off their wooden plaques.

Her great-great-grandmother wove blankets, and Ulibarri says she reprises those designs in her straw appliqué pieces.

Weaving and straw appliqué traditions are as old as the Spanish families that came and settled in the Rio Grande Valley in the 1600s and 1700s, she says.

The Spanish colonists didn't have gold for their altars and churches but learned to use shaved straw to mimic the reflective and burnished quality of the precious metal, she says.

Along with doing her art, she has worked full time at the Santa Fe Institute for 22 years. She also helps Cormac McCarthy, author of "No Country for Old Men" and "The Road," transcribe his typewritten pages to a computer format.

Additional art forms that will be featured at the market include santos, or paintings on wood of religious saints; bultos, or religious carvings; and retablos, or larger paintings on wooden panels.

More than 100 artists are expected to participate.

Art demonstrations, live music and the best of New Mexican food will round out the festivities.