

Explore “Roots ~ Raices” at NeoRio 2018

For immediate Release

(Long version press release - article format)

What: NeoRio 2018: Roots ~ Raices

Where: Montoso Campground, Wild Rivers Recreation Area, Rio Grande del Norte National Monument

When: Saturday, September 15, 4 - 9 pm (see schedule for specifics)

Price: Free and open to all. Donations appreciated. Camping \$7/night

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NeoRio offers thought-provoking art installations right on the rim of the Rio Grande gorge, along with a farm-to-table feast, poetry and music. The outdoor contemporary art and community event offers the opportunity to discover the sublime Wild Rivers area of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, or, to experience it in a whole new way. Now in its tenth year, this annual event offers a unique experience every year.

“Bringing the arts and the land together gives voice to the voiceless and ears to those who are ready to listen,” says Deborah Pender Hutchison, NeoRio attendee and poet in the NeoRio 2017 “Music and Poetry Salon.”

NeoRio 2018 will take place at Montoso Campground at the Wild Rivers Recreation Area on Saturday, September 15, from 4 to 9 pm.

Each year, NeoRio features a different theme. This year it is *Roots ~ Raices*, which “digs deeper” into the botanical strand of recent years - *Pollination* in 2016 and *Seeds ~ Semillas* in 2017. Roots are mysterious, complex, often unseen, but also innate and essential. This year’s theme is a little different because it intentionally encourages deep, metaphorical exploration and interpretation, invoking concepts of cultural heritage and place as well as other manifestations to be discovered throughout the afternoon and evening at NeoRio.

The *branching* form of roots is a natural growth pattern as well as a form of distribution and collection, following paths of least resistance. These root-like forms show up underground, but also as watersheds, circulatory systems and family heritage diagrams. Part of this theme is a call to “dig-in”; to discover and explore our own roots, and plant new ones; to learn, understand, and celebrate our own heritage, local cultural and agricultural practices as well as the native plants and ecosystems in Northern NM and beyond. Art installations and activities at NeoRio 2018 will begin to “unpack” this very full, poignant and broad-reaching theme in both literal and metaphorical ways. The event will host featured artists, Scott Sutton, Kacie Smith and UNM students of the immersive Land Arts of the American West program. NeoRio contributing artists are Martha Shepp and Nicholette Jean Codding.

Featured artist Scott Sutton, (ScottSuttonArt.com) originally from Oregon, moved to New Mexico where he received a Master of Landscape Architecture at University of New Mexico. He teaches artists how to forage for mineral pigments to make paints; and his passion for creating extends beyond the walls of his art studio through a combination of interests - land art, public art, and ecological design. He describes:

“NeoRio's theme of Roots inspired a project that will use maps to tell the story of “Place” and combine elements of art and landscape architecture to highlight the physical materials of earth, water, air, and light that have given form to the Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument. The vision integrates geographical information such as topographical maps, geological formations, ecological regions, hydrological systems, and watershed boundaries that inspired peoples to establish its roots within the Upper Rio Grande Watershed.”

Featured artist and educator Kacie Smith (SundryProjects.com) is originally from California and now lives in Albuquerque. She completed her BFA in Printmaking at Washington University in St. Louis, programs in Waldorf education and biodynamic farming, and her MFA in Art & Ecology at the University of New Mexico. With an affinity for textiles, she engages with a wide variety of mediums to create sculptural installations and interactive projects that explore the personal, historical and natural elements of place and craft. For NeoRio, Smith will set up a temporary outfitters station, inviting viewers to borrow from her collection of handmade backpack kits to use on-site. She describes:

“Inspired by various outdoor adventures, each backpack is designed with a specific activity in mind, such as foraging, journaling, etc. With a background in outdoor education and early childhood education, I create objects that engage with place, play, ritual and the body. The kits can be used solo or in groups at Wild Rivers.”

Land Arts of the American West - LAAW (LandArts.unm.edu) is a semester long, full-time, studio art program at the University of New Mexico, committed to mentoring undergraduate and graduate students into the field of Art & Ecology. 2018 LAAW artists include Sarah Canelas, Brionna Garcia, Kristen Geary, Erin Gould, Xena Gurule, Jeanette Hart-Mann, Ryan Henel, Kyle Holub, Nicholas Jacobsen, Blaise Koller, Rowan Roberts, and Jessica Zeglin. These individuals will convene at Wild Rivers before the event and camp on-site as they intimately explore the Rio Grande gorge.

“We will work both individually and collaboratively across creative disciplines of performance, time-based media, sculpture, and experimental art to explore a “rooted” sense of place to create finished works to share with the public,” describes Jeanette Hart-Mann, Director LAAW.

Contributing artist Martha Shepp is fairly new to New Mexico; her studies ranged from graphic design and dance to filmmaking and music. Her works across a range of media reveal her abiding interest in the intersection of community development, self-concept, and aesthetics. About her project for NeoRio, she states, “Roots, root words, and human-created sounds fascinate me. My project is an interactive typography installation, using natural, materials, print, and sound.”

Contributing artist Nicholette Jean has a multidisciplinary practice based in Portland, Oregon. In addition to fine art photography, Nicholette practices and teaches sustainable agriculture and living. She describes her installation at NeoRio as “an illumination of that which is seen and unseen...utilizing reflective surfaces, I expose what is above and below the surface....”

During the afternoon, guests are invited to tour and interact with the art installations and projects and explore family-friendly, hands-on activities offered by collaborators. The roots-inspired late afternoon poetry and music salon will begin at 5 pm, featuring youth poetry and local musicians.

Music from the High Desert Acoustic Duo (Justin Dean and Mark Dudrow) will usher in the evening festivities. Enjoy a locally-sourced, northern NM, fall Feast from the Questa Farmers Market growers, cooks and bakers. The Feast is coordinated by Gaea McGahee, manager of the Questa Farmers Market and contributors to the feast will be familiar to those who have visited the market. At dusk, on the heels of dinner, portable solar power provided by PPC Solar will allow NeoRio featured artists to offer short, informative, illustrated talks, giving a behind-the-scenes look at their onsite artworks and a brief visual tours of past works.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers and Trails Acts, and will be celebrated at NeoRio along with National Public Lands Day.

NeoRio is organized by LEAP (Land, Experience and Art of Place) in partnership with the new Questa Creative Council, the Bureau of Land Management's Taos Field Office and others.

Claire Coté, LEAP director, says, "At NeoRio we hope people experience a kind of alchemy in the 'confluence of art and environments.' NeoRio is a recipe of sorts combining the ingredients of art, music, poetry, lands, rivers, cultures, community, food and an interesting annual theme to create a special experience for our guests and all involved.

LEAP (a program of Local nonprofit Localogy), brings innovative artists to the monument each autumn through it's cornerstone event, NeoRio, transforming the Montoso Campground with surprising, site-specific art amid the piñon and cliffs.

NeoRio 2018 Schedule, Montoso Campground, Wild Rivers:

4 pm: Roots-Inspired Art Installations and Activities

5 pm: Poetry and Music Salon

6 pm: Farm-to-Table Feast and Music by Justin Dean and Mark Dudrow

7 pm: Artist Talks by NeoRio Featured Artists

8 pm: Campfire and Music (bring an instrument!)

Please carpool if you can; parking is limited and it's better for the planet! This is a *free* event; donations are much appreciated. NeoRio is made possible by individual donations, local business and media sponsorships as well as generous grant support. This project is supported in part by New Mexico Arts, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, and by the National Endowment for the Arts. Special thanks also to grants from Taos County, Questa Economic Development Fund, Chevron Questa Mine Grants for Good, and sponsorships from PPC Solar and others.

Find out more about NeoRio - the event, artists and activities at www.LeanSite.org or call Claire at 575-224-9066.

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