



CULTURAL CORNERSTONES:

at the

LAS CRUCES MUSEUMS



Las Cruces museums offer exciting exhibits for 2010

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As we jump into a new year, it seems appropriate to take a look at what we may expect from it, at least when it comes to our four city-operated museums.

The Railroad Museum and the Branigan Cultural Center will be celebrating milestones. All the museums will have exciting exhibits and events, including exhibits about famous artists Andy Warhol and Frida Kahlo.

Railroad Museum

The historic Santa Fe railroad depot building located at Mesilla Street and Las Cruces Avenue will mark 100 years in 2010 with a centennial lecture series "100 Years Ago: A Cross Cultural Look at Life in 1910 Southern New Mexico." Eleven lectures on a variety of humanities-related topics will be held at noon the second Tuesday of each month from January through November. This project is funded as part of the We the People initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities and in part by a grant from the New Mexico Humanities Council.

May 6 through 8, the popular Railroad Days will return to the depot and this year will include the dedication of the museum as part of the National Register of Historic Places, celebration of the building's 100th anniversary. If all goes well, there will be a special addition to the museum.

Another event not to be missed is the Old-Fashioned Holiday Display Dec. 3,

when the museum is decorated inside and out and Santa and his elf bring good cheer to all.

On-going activities at the Railroad Museum include films at 10:30 a.m. on the first and third Saturday of each month; the Rail Readers Book Club, which meets at 11 a.m. on the second Wednesday of each month; and summer classes for kids and adults.

Branigan Cultural Center

The Branigan Cultural Center, located on the north end of the Downtown Mall, is also celebrating a landmark in 2010 as it marks 75 years since its construction. The first special exhibit of the year opens in May. The Smithsonian Institution's "Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program 1942 - 1962" is an exhibit examining the largest guest worker program in U.S. history.

In August, they will feature a photo exhibit titled "Frida Kahlo: Through the Lens of Nickolas Muray."

The center will end the year with an excellent exhibit called "Jam Session: America's Jazz Ambassadors Embrace the World," a look at the United States "Jazz Diplomacy" during the height of the Cold War.

"Las Cruces: Crossroads of History" is a permanent exhibit at the Branigan, giving an overview of our area's history. Throughout the year, exhibits by local artists and art groups are also featured. The Branigan offers a variety of programs such as Visit our Ancestors community tours, hands-on craft activities, lectures, concerts and History Notes talks.

Las Cruces Museum of Art

The Museum of Art, located across from the Branigan Cultural Center, kicks off the year with a very special exhibit. On Feb. 5, it opens "Warhol & Pop Art." This exhibit was curated by the Museum of Art from pieces loaned by the De La Vega family and New Mexico State University. The exhibition features 20 Warhol works and includes works by many of his contemporaries including Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine.

Several special events are planned during the exhibition including lectures, educational programs and concerts. A book signing and lecture by noted children's author and illustrator James Warhola takes place on March 6.

The spring months will be filled with the annual high school and NMSU Bachelor of Fine Arts show, followed by an exciting slate of submission shows. Be sure to visit the galleries and check out the works of up-and-coming professional artists.

In December, the Museum of Art will close out 2010 with "Looking Ahead: Portraits from the Mott-Warsh Collection." The exhibit features portraits of African Americans in an array of media and presents nationally known artists such as Chuck Close and Romare Bearden alongside regionally known artists such as Mary Borgman and Allie McGhee.

Plans for educational programming are ongoing and the Studio Program is thriving. Registration has begun for winter/spring sessions and the Museum of Art will offer classes throughout the year.

Museum of Natural History

The Museum of Natural History at Mesilla Valley Mall has two confirmed traveling exhibits for 2010.

First is "A View From Space," scheduled for Jan. 29 through May 9, followed by "Hatching The Past: Dinosaur Nests, Eggs and Young," to be displayed from May 21 through Sept. 12.

Permanent exhibits at the museum feature animals of the Chihuahua Desert. The museum also offers a wide variety of special programming, including hands-on activities for kids, Saturday Science, Star Safaris, Science Café talks, Desert Treks (in March they're heading to Aden Crater) and summer nature camp.

One of the exciting events in this museum's future will be a move to a new home on Water Street in the old Bank of the Rio Grande building. The new facility will be a certified "green building" and will be filled with exciting new exhibits. The goal is to have the new Museum of Nature and Science open in 2012.

For more information on the museums and their exhibits, go to www.las-cruces.org/museums. The Museums are supported by the non-profit Foundation for Las Cruces Museums. You can help us in our mission by becoming a Friend of the museums. There is membership information on-line at www.flcm.blogspot.com. or you may pick up a brochure at any of the city museums or our gift shop. El Mercado de los Museos is located in the Museum of Art and is open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.