



Openings

Far left: Tanmaya Bingham's work *Offering* includes a self-portrait. She is one of four artists featured at Linda Durham Contemporary Art's show entitled *Houseguests 2009*. Near left: Linda Spier receives a surprise bouquet from fellow photographers Norman Mauskopf and Tony Bonanno in appreciation of her work with the Galisteo Basin Project, which opened at Photo Eye Gallery on Friday night. Spier described the project as "a wonderful snowballing of care and concern from the community." For more information, visit www.galisteobasinphotoproject.com.

KAREN LANIER/The Free Press

Taos jeweler selected as Indian Market poster artist

From staff reports

The Southwestern Association for Indian Arts has selected Taos jeweler Maria Samora as its 2009 Santa Fe Indian Market Poster Artist.

SWAIA will have a press conference on Feb. 18, 10 a.m. to noon, at Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino to unveil the 2009 poster followed by a special sit-down luncheon at Red Sage restaurant. There is a \$50 cost for the luncheon.

The selection of Samora as the 2009 Santa Fe Indian Market poster artist represents a dramatic departure from past poster artist selections and is literally and figuratively indicative of the new face of Indian Market, a SWAIA news release said.

Samora has shown her work at Indian Market for the last four years. Since her precocious and highly successful debut at Market, which allowed her to focus on her jewelry fulltime, Samora has been making a considerable impact on Native art and Southwestern jewelry design, the news release said.

"I feel extremely honored to be the person to represent market. I feel really blessed that my career was basically jump-started from my first year at Indian Market. When I first did Indian Market it was hugely successful and it allowed me to do the jewelry full-time," Samora said.

Her expressive jewelry designs inhabit

two worlds, where tradition and innovation intermingle. They balance non-traditional materials such as gold and diamonds with delicately hammered silver and other metals created with an intuitive hand.



Maria Samora

"We are delighted that the Santa Fe Indian Market will have such a young and vibrant spirit to present Native people and cultures to the world in 2009. Maria represents the continuing vitality of Native art; its continual reformulation and transformation to sustain and nurture centuries old traditions of art production," said SWAIA Executive Director Bruce Bernstein. "Her work embodies the depth and richness of cultures and continuity that once again presents

the singularity of Native culture to New Mexico's identity past, present and future."

Samora describes her work as "natural and interplaying geometric forms transformed into contemporary designs. Subtle textures, overlay, various patinas and the tonal play of mixed metals blend richly and create contrast and dimension."

The result is a cosmopolitan tone, rich and intricate, but unquestionably modern.

"I was born and raised in Taos and grew up around Native American jewelry," Samora said. "I wanted to take the classic designs that inspired me to a new innovative level."

"It came naturally for me to create contemporary designs incorporating traditional elements."

'Benchwarmers' is clever and well-performed at Playhouse

A plain park bench sits alone on the stage at the Santa Fe Playhouse. What do you make of it?

For eight years now, local playwrights, actors and directors have tackled this simple set. Through Feb. 13, the Playhouse presents an evening of eight new short plays by local writers, realized by local performers. As always, the results are mixed. But the overall effect of this year's "Benchwarmers" is pretty darn good.

Rosemary Zibart's wicked satire "Auction," a Swiftian modest proposal to settle the "Israeli question," spotlights Paul Walsky's coiled spring of talent in the opener. It sets the tone for thoughtful and keen observation of the human condition from that bench.

"Stuck," by Robert Benjamin and Elaine Jarvik, lightly introduces the theme of the battle of the sexes with a date on the roller coaster — the bench is the front of the car where the couple, versatile Lori Tirgath and Tom Romero, have their first date. Some day, a second act, perhaps, or even a sitcom?

It's off to Paris for Susan Apker's "The Eiffel Truth," a slice of life as improbable as

it is touching. Then go back to 1928 for "Ebb and Flo," as Romero and Suzaanne Lederer (who wrote and directed) give a nice riff on "the theatre is dying" that is just the slightest bit didactic, but fun.

Ron Bloomberg sets up a predictable comic situation in "Shopping Bags," as the gender wars begin to heat up. Be surprised by this one. Deborah Magid's "The Wedding Night" shines a soft light on love and a tragic part of our history. Have your handkerchief ready.

"Body and Soul," by Thomas Woodward, offers a complex idea in an unusual form. Mario Moreno, Mark Siciliano, Annie Goodwin and Nicole Mack carry off this troubling little plot and its resolution, with Pal Dybel's direction.

Final vignette of the evening is "The Speed of Love," a sort of science-fiction fantasy of love and confusion reminiscent of the novel "Time and Again."

As a bonus, on the weekend of Feb. 14-15, casts will give stage readings of another nine of the 60 plays submitted for "Benchwarmers" this year. If you enjoy the eighth season of this local showcase feature, you'll probably want to see those, too.

The Playhouse is at 142 East De Vargas St., and the box-office telephone is 988-4262.



Bill Dunning