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CREEDE AND TELLURIDE WIN GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

A total of 13 Colorado cities were nominated

The towns of Creede and Telluride were honored at a ceremony at the Denver Art Museum on Friday, February 26, as part of Arts Advocacy Day. The annual Governor's Arts Award recognizes a Colorado town or city for their collective efforts to enhance their community and their economy through strategic use of the arts. Governor Ritter joined Creede Mayor Rex Shepperd and Telluride Mayor Stu Fraser in unveiling the awards, which were original artworks by artist Gayle Gerson of Grand Junction.

In announcing the awards, Governor Ritter noted "Not only are the arts a way to share our heritage and show us new ways of thinking and seeing, the arts are also a way to grow jobs and revitalize Colorado's economy. It gives me great pleasure to honor these two communities."

The Colorado Council on the Arts, a division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, annually convenes a panel to review the nominations. Although the Governor's Award typically honors a single town or city, the review panel felt strongly that both communities show exemplary commitment to the arts as a way to enhance the cultural and economic vitality of their communities. The other nominated cities were Arvada, Broomfield, Fort Collins, Glenwood Springs, Golden, Lafayette, La Junta, Montrose, Nederland, Pueblo and Salida.

In selecting Creede as a recipient, the review panel cited the town's transformation from a dying mining town to a thriving tourism destination, with the arts as the catalyst. The panel was impressed with the vision of the town's Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1966 to recruit a summer theatre as a strategy for economic stability. The Creede Repertory Theatre is now in its 44th year and attracts 20,000 theatre goers each summer. The panel noted that the Town, the school system, and the business district are active partners with the town's arts groups. They were also impressed that Creede is home to artists and authors with international acclaim.

The Town of Telluride, which won an honorable mention in 2008, impressed the panel with its high level of support for locally grown arts programs. Although Telluride is known for its international summer festivals, the panel noted a strong commitment to funding for local arts activities by the Town of Telluride, the Telluride Foundation, the Mountain Village Owners' Association, and San Miguel County. The panel also applauded Telluride's commitment to youth arts, including their ongoing integration of the arts into the school curriculum. The panel was also impressed with Telluride's Cultural Master Plan and Commission on Cultural Assistance.

The awards were two original mixed media collages by artist Gayle Gerson of Grand Junction. The artworks will hang in public locations in the respective cities. In commissioning Gayle, the selection jury noted the spirit and energy in Gayle's work, her use of bright colors, and the movement and depth that she created in her compositions. Also, they liked her use of mixed media/collage elements and thought her work was unusual and original. Gayle has studied under the guidance of many artists in watercolor, oil and experimental workshops. She teaches experimental mixed media classes at the Art Center in Grand Junction. Gayle shows her work at The Blue Pig Gallery in Palisade and her art is in many private and public collections.

In 2007, the City of Grand Junction won the award, a large mono-print by Joellyn Duesberry. In 2008, the City of Loveland won, receiving a painting by Duke Beardsley.

The Colorado Council on the Arts combines state funds with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and invests in communities across the state to ensure that the cultural, educational and economic benefits of the arts are enjoyed by thousands of Colorado youth and millions of Colorado citizens and visitors every day.

Photos available upon request.

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