

4 ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and culture play an important part in the County's life, although the economic, educational, and social benefits that the County receives from arts and culture are not always recognized, nor are the important role of the County's arts and culture professionals fully understood. Internationally recognized artists in photography such as Ansel Adams, and painters such as Chiura Obata, have been drawn to Mariposa County by the spectacular environment of Yosemite and by their works have contributed to its worldwide recognition as a special place. However, Mariposa County has more to offer the artist than just the inspiration of Yosemite. According to the Mariposa Artists Network (MAN):

Mariposa is a great place to live as an artist - great weather, Yosemite, low cost of living, small town atmosphere, and plenty of room for that huge dream studio. Enjoying the unprecedented beauty of the Sierras while remaining close to key art markets gives Mariposa's artists a quality of life most artists only dream of.

Mariposa County is home to many arts and culture professionals who practice in many different fields, including painting, photography, sculpture, mosaics, woodworking, metalworking, glassblowing, film, video and various forms of multi-media. In addition to the creative individuals who make the arts a vital part of the County's life, there is a network of organizations dedicated to furthering arts and culture in the County. These organizations not only provide support for the County's arts and culture community, but sponsor events that make the arts and culture available to the County's residents and draw people into the County.

4.1 ARTS AND CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS AND EVENTS

The arts and culture organizations in Mariposa County are as diverse as the arts and culture community itself, and range from broadly based organizations that encompass a wide range of arts and cultural activities, to groups that focus on a particular aspect of artistic expression. Each of these groups also is active in sponsoring or facilitating events that provide opportunities for residents and visitors alike to experience and participate in a broad range of arts and cultural activities. Among the groups that are active in the County are:

- **The Mariposa County Arts Council** is an incorporated not-for-profit organization, established in 1981 and created to promote and support all forms of the cultural arts, for all ages, throughout Mariposa County. The Council acts as a liaison between the arts community and the County Board of Supervisors and works with local authorities in sponsoring and organizing ongoing and special events. The Council receives funding from federal, state, local and private sources, and has a salaried staff. Among the events and programs that the Council sponsors are:

- **The Annual Storytelling Festival**, held in Mariposa during the second weekend in March, has grown to become one of the Council's most popular. In 2002, nationally renowned storytellers from California, Virginia, Oklahoma, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, participated in preserving part of the cultural heritage through the spoken word.
- **Young Masters' Competition**, held in February, provides a venue for young Mariposa County artists to compete and display their work in a variety of media – paintings, drawings, photography, sculpture and mixed media. The judged competition offers cash awards, ribbons and display in the Council's Gallery.
- **The Special Events and Artists in School** regularly brings performers and other specific arts events to schools, giving local students exposure to many forms of artistic expression. Artists of various mediums explain their work, answer questions, and offer displays and demonstrations. Storytellers from the annual Festival perform in the schools and conduct workshops incorporating Storytelling in the core curriculum.
- **Mariposa Evenings** feature local and regional performers every Friday and Saturday night in July and August. The open-air programs are held in the center of Mariposa's historic downtown district. Admission is free with costs underwritten by business and individual sponsorships.
- **Tellabration** is a worldwide storytelling event where communities all over the world gather to tell stories on the same date, and at the same time in their time zone, and is sponsored by the National Storytelling Network. Tellabration-Mariposa features students in grades K-6 Grand Authors, who are winners of an Arts Council countywide storytelling writing contest, and tell their stories with local storytellers and musicians.
- **The Sierra Nevada Art Festival**, held in early June, combines music, festivities, art demonstrations, open art studios and an art show. Regional, award-winning artists display their works in the Mariposa Art Park and along the Mariposa Creek Walkway.
- **The Arts Council Gallery**, located on 5th Street in Mariposa, is a retail venue for the work of over 40 local and regional professional artists.
- **The Sixth Street Cinema (SSC) and Rural Media Arts Center** (formerly the Film Club) is a non-profit organization with a dual mission. The Sixth Street Cinema screens diverse films and documentaries usually shown exclusively in larger urban areas, with discussions before and after the films. The Rural Media Center is the educational branch of the theater, and is working with local agencies to incorporate "digital cinema" in order to expand its programming. With a broadband connection and a video projector, the theater will be able to present award-winning documentaries from around the world. Another area of interest is direct satellite feeds from World Link TV and ITVS. The SSC is also exploring the possibility of co-hosting digital film festivals by partnering with one of the many and growing digital film festivals worldwide. The broadband connection would allow community members to participate in regional and national town hall meetings, video conferencing, program lectures specific to the humanities, as well as offering high caliber humanities courses on the level of a UC or private school.
- **The Mariposa Arts Network (MAN)** is a web site created as an outreach of the Sixth Street Cinema and Rural Media Arts Center, and dedicated to unifying Mariposa artists and arts organizations, promoting local artists and arts events, and strengthening the county's economy through the arts. One of MAN's current efforts is to raise funding to

bring John Villani, author of The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America, to town to speak about how Mariposa can become an art town.

- **Yosemite Renaissance** is a non-profit organization for the support of the arts of Yosemite. Its programs include an annual art competition/exhibition, an Artists-in-Residence program, and a biannual auction of Yosemite art to support the programs of Yosemite Renaissance.
 - **Yosemite Renaissance** is an annual competition/exhibition, intended to encourage diverse artistic interpretations of Yosemite, with subject matter limited to recent works on the landscape, environment, wildlife and people of Yosemite, or the environment of the Sierra. Entries may be in any medium including painting, photography/digital or other media, including drawings, pastels, printmaking, textiles, collage, and 3-dimensional works.
 - **The Artists-in-Residence Program** provides lodging in the Yosemite area for up to one month for established artists. Artists-in-residence do not teach during their residencies, although they participate in a community event with local artists. An annual group exhibit is held in the Yosemite Gallery of works by recent Artists-in-Residence, and the artists provide one work that has resulted from their residency to be considered for donation to the permanent collection of the Yosemite Museum. For the year 2003, two to six participants will be selected for the Program, chosen from among artists referred by other artists, critics and curators and/or from portfolios and resumes submitted by the artists themselves.
- **The Yosemite Fund** was incorporated in January 1988. The total funds committed to support projects in the Park are in excess of \$19,000,000, and over 150 Projects have been made possible by gifts to the Fund. Recent projects include preservation of Jorgensen artworks held by the Yosemite Museum, and an exhibit showcasing the Museum's collection of George Fiske photographs. A project of the Fund for 2002 is the Yosemite Great Art Exhibit, an exhibition organized by the Autry Museum of Western Heritage to be developed from existing publicly held pieces and selected private collections. The exhibit will consist of over 150 works, include a full-sized catalogue book and will travel to museum facilities across the country.
- **John Muir Presentations** produces seven living history stage performances to organizations and communities nationwide, as well as overseas. Three of the productions are one-person shows based on the life, achievements, and adventures of the naturalist John Muir. A fourth production is a two-person play based on the historic encounter between Muir and President Theodore Roosevelt in the Yosemite wilderness. Two shows are based on the ordeals of American pioneer women, one primarily centering on the trek by wagon train across the country, and the other on women in the California gold fields. One program deals with the life and adventures of John Wesley Powell, the first man to brave, by boat, the dangers of the Grand Canyon.
- **Yosemite Music & Art** produces a one-man show, "Vintage Songs of Yosemite," which celebrates the first century of the Yosemite Experience through vintage music, stories, art, and photography. Songs performed and preserved through this show include "The Yosemite March Two-Step", "The Bridge by Yosemite Falls" and "I'm Strong for Camp Curry".
- **The Ansel Adams Gallery**, located in Yosemite Valley, began conducting photography workshops in 1940, and continues to conduct over a dozen workshops each year. The workshops are open to anyone seriously interested in photography, whether student,

amateur or professional. The Galley also provides a retail venue for local, regional and national artists (as well as for the work of Ansel Adams).

- **The Sierra Artists Gallery** in Mariposa sponsors the Gold Rush Days Art Show and also provides a retail venue for local artists.

4.2 ARTS AND CULTURE VENUES

Although Mariposa County has a lively arts and culture community, the physical venues for the visual and performing arts are limited. The Mariposa Arts Council Gallery, along with a number of private galleries provides retail venues for local visual artists, as well as space for periodic exhibitions. The Yosemite Museum in the National Park has an extensive collection of works related to Yosemite and sponsors exhibitions with Yosemite-related themes.

The new Downtown Art Park, near the junction of Highways 49 South and 140, and adjacent to the Mariposa Creek Parkway, is intended to provide an outdoor venue for the visual and performing arts. The site is a natural amphitheater rising from the Creek to the highway. Mature trees are located on the upper portion of the site, providing visual interest and shade. The “stage” area of the site is framed by rock outcroppings of the creek and the hill beyond. In addition to hosting outdoor concerts, art festivals and dramatic performances, the Art Park has also been envisioned as Mariposa’s first public sculpture garden. A connection can be made to the Mariposa County Park, expanding the potential use of the site. The Rotary Amphitheater in the Park provides a venue for outdoor performances, and improvements, including new seating, are planned to expand its use.

There is no dedicated indoor performing arts facility in the County, although stage productions and concerts are held at the Mariposa High School Auditorium. Commercial facilities may provide some venues, such as the poetry nights at the Pony Expresso coffee house.