



Clockwise from top left: En plein air artist Michelle Chrisman paints Taos Mountain in July, photo by Katharine Egli; Chrisman sets up her easel to paint Taos Mountain in July, photo by Katharine Egli; "Full Bloom at Taos Gorge," by Chrisman, courtesy photo.

muddled my way through by knowing a little Arabic language," she added.

She returned to New York, then moved to Albuquerque when she was about 35. In the Duke City she started a graphic design business and became interested in the art she saw, "especially in Santa Fe," she said.

The shift to working as a full-time fine artist began in 1995. She took a weeklong plein-air painting workshop in Taos with Ray Vanilla and Kevin McPherson. She made a slow transition from painting part time over about five years, until finally taking the leap to work full time in fine art 15 years ago.

More recently, she mentioned she gained influence from Louisa McElwain. "She was the most

exciting Northern New Mexico plein air painter ever," Chrisman said.

I use speed, getting the painting done in one sitting, (called *alla prima*) and I like the way the outdoors forces me to paint fast. I use speed to my benefit," she said, "because I feel it brings a risk-taking environment in responding to the weather. Louisa called it being an action painter."

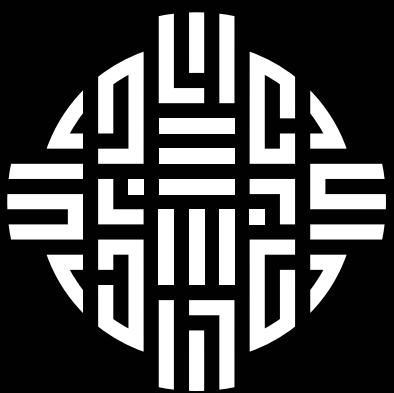
"I moved to Taos because the Abiquiú, Taos, Ghost Ranch, Northern New Mexico area is what I want to paint. I find it incredibly ... paintable," she said. "Everywhere I look and go is just beautiful in Taos. I feel like I live in a visual feast. I could look anywhere in Taos, and want to paint what's in front of me. When I go to other places, it's not that way. Northern New Mexico just

really speaks to me."

Her favorite spots to paint are the Río Grande Gorge in the Taos area, and the Río Pueblo in Abiquiú. "I love the way the cliffs create abstract shapes. And I do love painting gardens in Taos," she said. "I like to paint, and bring beauty to my canvas in a way that makes people feel happy."

She credits her background in advertising with her painting success because it helps her market her art. She does much of her own marketing, beyond her galleries' efforts.

When I'm outside painting, I feel like I am acknowledging God's creation; the awesome beauty we are surrounded with."



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