

ART SCENE

Taos Canyon Art Tour features six galleries

Eric Fincher, *staff writer*

TAOS CANYON — The Taos Canyon Art Tour is a year-around event which takes place in scenic Taos Canyon west of Angel Fire. Many artists have set up shop in some of the quaint studio/galleries that line meandering U.S. 64, and Dawn Chandler is one of those artists.

Set among vertical canyon walls, tall pines and brightly colored flowers on a narrow swathe of level ground is Taos Dawn Designs Gallery. The walls of the converted garage, now serving as an art gallery, are adorned with some of Chandler's more abstract pieces which are illuminated by small yet stylish track lighting. Chandler's abstract works flow with a medley of earthy colors, other-worldly shapes and images with dream-like origins.

"I feel my abstract pieces illustrate feelings and memories," Chandler said in a soft, almost doctor-like tone. "For example, one of my pieces is called, 'Yearning.' It was painted in a phase of my life when I was looking

for something, although I wasn't quite sure what I was looking for. I guess I was exploring what it means to be a single woman in her 40s."

Although Chandler loves to do abstract works of art, it's the more life-like works that pay the bills. Chandler has done a multitude of works for Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron.

"I love painting landscapes of the area around Philmont," Chandler said. "It's just so beautiful."

In the 1980s, Chandler participated in Philmont's difficult Rayado program, she then served on staff at Philmont as a ranger and training ranger. In 1988, she was chosen to serve as Philmont's first woman camp director.

Chandler's studio is an eclectic web of paintings, photos, cut outs from magazines, plants, paints and books.

The small but functional studio is also home to projects in the works—pieces which captivate the New Mexico sky like nothing else.

"People are sometimes curious

about the vertical format of many of my landscape pieces," Chandler said. "Most photos you see are horizontal renditions of landscapes—which is how we tend to perceive the world."

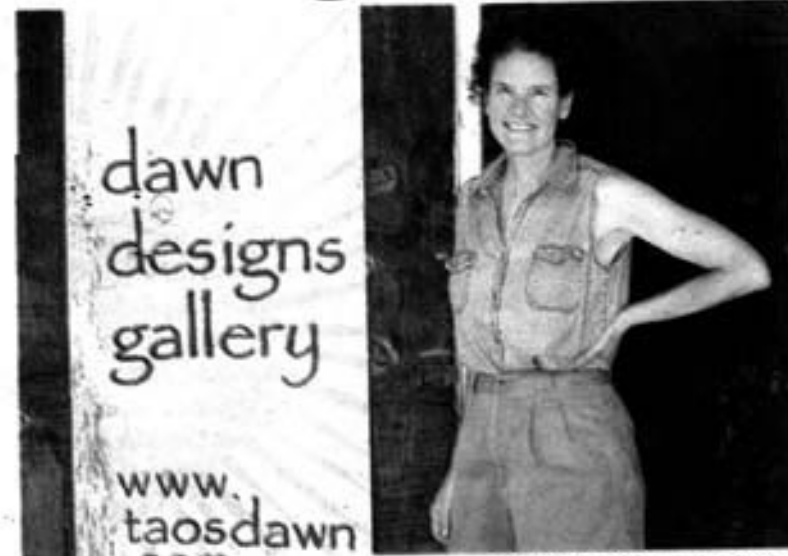
Chandler has always been attracted to the concept of vertical landscapes, she equates them to a window, doorway or an escape in some way.

"Some of my pieces almost take on humanistic characteristics—like a tall slender person," Chandler said, motioning to a painting of tall, golden aspens in the fall.

Chandler's landscape paintings range from portraits of deep mysterious forests to billowing white clouds over auburn prairie lands. Chandler uses a wide range of media to produce her pieces, this is especially evident with her abstract work.

"If I'm looking for a certain texture or pattern, I will use just about anything," Chandler said. "I've used things like lace or bubble wrap to get the feeling I'm looking for."

Chandler earned her bachelor



Chronicle photo by Eric Fincher

Artist Dawn Chandler stands outside her Taos Canyon Gallery. She, along with several other artists in the canyon is part of the Taos Canyon Art Tour which lasts all year long.

of fine arts degree in painting from Miami University of Ohio in 1988. She went on to receive her master of fine arts from Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine.

The future is a blank canvas for Chandler, one of her plans is for her and a fellow artist to rent out gallery space in Taos and display some of their work.

"We've done this once before,

I spent a year planning for this art show," Chandler said. "Since it's so hard for an artist to get their work displayed in a gallery in Taos, so we just rented some space on our own to display our work. I think I may look at trying to get my work in at one of the galleries in Santa Fe or Denver."

The Taos Canyon Art Tour features six galleries and shops.

Info, 505-827-0300. ■