



Rancher and Painter Alice Leese named NPAF's November Artist-in-Residence at Fort Union National Monument

The program, now in its fourth year at the historic northern New Mexico National Monument, is a successful cooperative venture between the National Park Service and The National Parks Arts Foundation to bring a variety of artists to work and live at the monument and make a public presentation.

Alice Leese will be doing her first public presentation on Friday, November 9th, at 1 PM, and may be following that with a second one in Las Vegas, NM.

Alice Leese, who is both an accomplished artist who works her family ranch in Winkler County, Texas, which shares the southeast corner of New Mexico south of Jal, as a border, will be coming to Fort Union this coming month to bring her unique and expressive style to bear on the amazing landscapes of New Mexico in the fall. The artist, selected by a panel of judges, will spend the beautiful late fall months at the historic Northern New Mexico monument.

Alice, raised on the ranch which has been in her family for 100 years, says that the solitude and rhythm of this particular landscape is essential to how she approaches her art: "Living out here has also given me a frame of reference for time and patience, some days we are horseback from sunup to sundown, ranches here are large and pastures are sometimes 15 square miles, it takes some patience to not rush the cattle, they go at their pace and we just follow when we are rounding-up or working them." She says that the ranch is very remote, and even requires the occasional climb on a windmill to grab spotty cellphone reception. Though she loves being a managing partner at their ranch, she often doesn't get the focused time to paint, so being able to focus for a solid month on her art is an amazing opportunity that she will make the most of. In addition to her full time job, she is also completing an M.F.A. at the same time.

She usually paints plein air sketching in watercolors but then returning to the scene to paint in oil, which lets her capture a certain feeling, a way of seeing

that has sometimes prismatic qualities. “Painting outdoors in oil, a slow drying medium, lets the artist get to mood and details, or lets the artist capture quickly the essence of an area. Don't remember who said it but painting on site is a way to let the viewer feel what it is like to be in a certain spot. I'm not painting a specific area but what it feels like to be there.”

Alice is curious to see how this particular landscape in and around Fort Union will lead to new ideas and themes. She adds, “The area around Fort Union National Monument in the high desert will give a sense of space to the paintings and a sense of history. When I think of all the people who traveled the Santa Fe Trail and the Army who protected the travelers and the Native Americans who were impacted by the migration to the west it is sort of with a sense of awe for the history of the fort and trail. I will try to depict the sense of the passage of time and all the history that surrounds westward expansion using the medium of the visual arts without the aid of written word so that the paintings can speak and say what can't be said with words.”

“National Parks have always welcomed artistic interpretations in support of land advocacy” said Charles Strickfaden, superintendent of Fort Union National Monument. “We are pleased to host artists who communicate complex and contemporary issues through their chosen medium.”

Fort Union National Monument, located in Mora County near Watrous, New Mexico, was the largest frontier military post and supply center of the southwest. It also was the hub of commerce, national defense, and migration at the final stretch of the Santa Fe Trail. The richly evocative remnants of a post-civil war era adobe fort became a National Monument in 1954 under the Eisenhower administration.

This program, implemented with great success by NPAF at other National Parks, allows visitors to see the Monument through the eyes of world-class artists and visionaries. The AiR program is made possible through the philanthropic support of donors of all sorts ranging from corporate sponsors, small business, and art patrons and citizen-lovers of the Parks. NPAF (www.nationalparksartsfoundation.org) is always seeking new partners for its wide ranging Artist-in-Residence programs.