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Cultures forever tied by corn

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By **Ariel Barkhurst** - Express-News

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Nine brightly lit transparent panels with photos of corn in shades from salmon to maroon to gold hang in an abandoned century-old stone and straw corn crib in a 1,200-acre forest on the South Side.

Artist Ansen Seale created the public art installation as part of Fotoseptiembre USA. He considers the panels to be a tribute to the cultures that have inhabited the land of the Land Heritage Institute, where the photos hang.

"Artifacts found here," Seale said, referring to the area on the southern bank of the Medina River between Applewhite Road and Neal Road about 10 miles south of downtown, "showed that the land has been inhabited continuously for 10,000 years. And the thing that ties all those cultures together is corn."

Corn, Seale said Sunday during a festival for the unveiling of "The Corn Crib," has been important for each culture that has come and gone from the historic patch of ground, now a heavily forested living museum.

"What I was trying to do, artistically, was refill the abandoned crib with corn," he said.

He did this partly through using his trademarked ePan, a camera that photographs a subject from 360 degrees, creating a flat image that depicts all the angles of the subject, like a flattened map of the globe.

Using the ePan, he photographed the entire circumference of six ears of Indian corn, creating large expanses of rows and columns of colorful kernels.

Two of the remaining three panels depict whole ears photographed traditionally, and the last depicts a half-husked ear of familiar yellow corn.

Seale began working on his installation, which he completed last week, in March after Penelope Boyer of the Land Heritage Institute asked him to work on a commission from the city of San Antonio for a Fotoseptiembre USA installation about the land.

For Boyer, the project was about getting an artist to pay homage to the LHI, and Seale's ePan sounded like the perfect way to do that.

"His camera lends itself to looking at small things as if they were a landscape," Boyer said.

Boyer collaborated with Michael Mehl, founder and director of Fotoseptiembre USA, to secure the city's funding for the public art project.

"Part of the notion," Mehl said, "was to develop a public art installation that wasn't in the typical forum. It's about producing site-specific public art in places you wouldn't normally do that."

As a result, "The Corn Crib" will remain in the corn crib on the LHI land until, in Boyer's words, "it starts falling down."



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Ansen Seale, the artist behind "The Corn Crib," said corn has been important for each culture that has used the ground on the South Side that serves as the home for his creation.

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