

## Exhibit blends photography, nature and unique history

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Web Posted: 09/16/2010 12:00 CDT

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Standing at the center of the Land Heritage Institute (LHI) in South Bexar County, Michael Mehl, founder and director of the FotoSeptiembre Festival, says looking across the 1,200 acres that make up the historical site is a somewhat disconcerting experience.

"It creates this sensation of being in a kind of dimensional warp," Mehl explains. "If you're at the lower edges of the Medina River, you would think you're hundreds of miles from civilization."

Nevertheless, the LHI, once the proposed site for the Applewhite Reservoir before San Antonians voted the project down in 1991, is only a stone's throw away from the Toyota plant.

It's also the location for the southernmost exhibit at this year's FotoSeptiembre Festival.

The site-specific photo installation titled "Diverse Cultures/One Land" will open Sunday and feature a collaborative exhibit by artists Nancy Cavender-Garcia, Robert Garcia, Jennifer Martin and Whitney Smith.

Mehl has created the image composites of the installation.

This marks the second year the LHI has participated in the annual photography festival through a neighborhood arts grant from the city of San Antonio Office of Cultural Affairs.

Last year, the LHI feature work by photographer Ansen Seale. This year, Mehl says the exhibit is about "interpreting the land and putting those ideas into historical context."

From a historical perspective, an artist would be hard-pressed to find a subject as rich in history and as environmentally untouched as the LHI.

When the property was deemed an archeological jackpot during the initial construction for the Applewhite project, the city began to brainstorm other uses for the land.

"The scar they created when they first dug to build the reservoir revealed the layers of history very clearly," said Penelope Boyer, special projects coordinator for FotoSeptiembre and the LHI. "You could count the centuries back on the escarpment. It's chilling to know what you're standing on."

What's underneath the surface is Texas history and culture dating back 15,000 years, Boyer said.

With digital cameras in hand, the artists of "Diverse Cultures/One Land" walked across the property capturing photographic evidence of the vast

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influences on the land, including that of the Coahuiltecan Indians, Spanish settlers, Anglo-Saxons, slaves, cattle ranchers, archaeologists and current Native Americans.

"Of all the cultures that have ever lived in Texas, pretty much all of them have lived on this property," said Cavender-Garcia, lead artist on the project. "Diverse cultures have always flourished and clashed with each other on this land."

The outdoor installation itself is an assortment of digital images of the LHI printed on both sides of large pieces of aluminum. The photos include longhorn cattle that can be found grazing on the land, descendants of the ancient Indians, as well as detailed shots of the Spanish-influenced construction still on site.

"Diverse Cultures/One Land" will hang along the fence line of the LHI as a semi-permanent exhibit.

"We wanted to show the history and heritage and allow those who view the images the opportunity to realize that they too are linked to the land and the cultures that have come before them," Cavender-Garcia added.

*Diverse Cultures/One Land will have an opening reception from 4-6 p.m. Sunday, at Land Heritage Institute, 1349 Neal Road, between Applewhite and Pleasanton roads. Visit [www.landheritageinstitute.org](http://www.landheritageinstitute.org).*

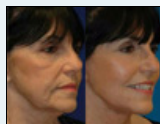
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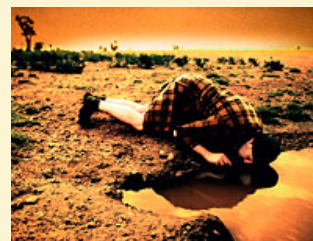
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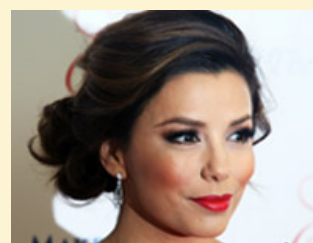
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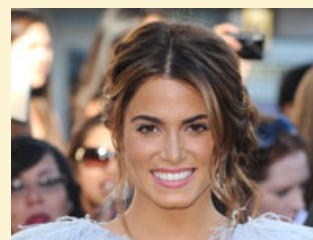
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