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LIVING OPTIONS

SUMMER 2012

summer 2012

TEXAS NHOME MAGAZINE



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Fine-Art Photography on a World-Class Level

PHOTOGRAPHY TAKES CENTER STAGE IN THE ALAMO CITY THIS SEPTEMBER WITH THE FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL, A TRULY COMMUNITY-ORIENTED CELEBRATION OF CULTURE.

// BY: CHRISTA BROTHERS

Again, through all of September, San Antonio will be abuzz with photography. From institutions like the San Antonio Museum of Art, the Southwest School of Art and the Instituto Cultural de México to local galleries and even your neighborhood coffee shop, photography will take center stage in our city.

Now in its 18th year, the annual FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA International Photography Festival is scheduled from Sept. 1 through 30. The festival, founded in 1995 by Michael Mehl with the intention of creating a corridor for an artistic exchange between Mexico and our Alamo City, has grown into an internationally acclaimed event.

“Since San Antonio has such strong ties to Mexico, I thought more of it being a vehicle between the U.S. and Mexico; I did not anticipate the enormous response from Asia and Europe,” Mehl says. “The exhibits feature now the work of photographic artists from the USA, Asia, Europe and Mexico.”

For the last five years, the photography festival has added its signature exhibits at the four galleries of the Instituto Cultural de México. These exhibits are curated, and as Mehl explains, “serve as an example of the

range of photographic images that we like to see. But foremost, FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA allows everyone to participate. It is inclusive rather than rejecting entries through so-called gatekeepers. [It is] a truly community-based festival – an organic thing that has evolved and transformed itself into the internationally celebrated event it is today.

“It was always seen as providing a platform or an opportunity for ideas to grow and develop and was never meant to be a strict, organized, academic and controlled event. FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA SAFOTO is an open-source festival in the true sense of the term. We provide an accessible, integral system that allows artists to develop their own content in a manner that fits their best interests and the reach of their resources. In this sense, we are uniquely a 21st-century festival.”

This open-source opportunity has allowed not only for its eclectic exhibitions, but also for its enormous expansion and participation throughout San Antonio and now even the Hill Country. Under the umbrella of FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA International Photography Festival, contributing events and exhibitions are listed and recognized on the FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA website, which



FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA 2011 - SOUTHWEST SCHOOL OF ART

MICHAEL MEHL BY CHANG, CHAOTANG



serves as an event guide, as well as their documentation.

From small venues like the aforementioned coffee shops, artist studios and even various appropriated spaces to the local gallery community, just about everyone is on board. Besides the small venues, galleries and the signature exhibits at the Instituto Cultural de México, in partnership with the City of San Antonio Office of Cultural Affairs (as part of the Sister City Cultural Exchange Initiatives, which sets the framework for cultural exchanges between San Antonio and sister cities in other countries), almost all of the city's cultural institutions are participating in the annual event.

The list is truly impressive: to name a few, the San Antonio Museum of Art with an exhibit curated by David Rubin, cura



FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA 2011 - INSTITUTO CULTURAL DE MÉXICO

tor of contemporary art at the Brown Foundation; the Southwest School of Art with a curated exhibition by Kathy Armstrong; the exhibits presented by the UTSA Department of Art & Art History at the UTSA Art Gallery, 1604 campus, and its Satellite Space; and the student exhibitions at SAY Sí and Northwest Vista College.

“The community involvement makes this festival so special and different from other events,” Mehl says. “We set the tone, the framework, and strive to continuously raise the bar on the quality of the exhibits, but in the end, the community as a whole creates the experience.”

The community may sustain the festival now, but it took the initiative and the courage of one individual to bring the event to life and make a tremendous difference in the cultural offerings and experiences in our city.

“I am a photographer myself,” Mehl answers when asked what sparked the idea of a photography festival. “It was very frustrating to go through all the work and expense of putting a photography show together to only have it seen by maybe 100 people and then be left with no documentation and recollection of it ever happen-

ing. I wanted to create a context, a legacy and memory of some sort that was available to a wide audience. It must have struck a chord because the event took off very quickly.”

What started out as a remedy for disappointment and in support of other photographers to create opportunities now offers a tremendous opportunity for all of us. FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA International Photography Festival allows us to experience local, national and international fine-art photography on a world-class level.

We all can take part in the excitement and explore the countless venues participating in the citywide event. We can even pick up a piece or two of art not only in support of our art community, but also to enrich and brighten our lives by bringing this creative spirit into our homes. ■

For more information and a listing of all scheduled events, please go to <http://fotoseptiembreusa.com>.

Upcoming Alamo City Events

YOUR SOURCE FOR EVENTS IN AND AROUND
SAN ANTONIO THROUGH THE END OF 2012

AUG. 4: FORD CANOE CHALLENGE

More than 90 canoe teams, including local celebrities, city officials, corporate teams, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, compete in the FORD Canoe Challenge at the River Walk. www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com/events/ford-canoe-challenge

AUG. 18-25: CULINARIA: RESTAURANT WEEK 2012

Get great deals on amazing meals at San Antonio's top restaurants. <http://culinariasa.org/wine-festival/main/events.php>

AUG. 25: FOURTH ANNUAL HILL COUNTRY DOLL SHOW & SALE

This event at the Live Oak Civic Center in Live Oak features 75 vendors with both antique and modern collectible dolls, bears, miniatures and restoration. One of the best in Texas! Show opens at 9 a.m.

SEPTEMBER ALL MONTH: FOTOSEPTIEMBRE USA

This annual international photography festival is a unique, eclectic, month-long celebration of the photographic arts. Dozens of exhibits showing traditional photographs, digital images, photography-based works, photographic installations, funky camera and alternative processes are presented in galleries, museums, art centers and other exhibition spaces throughout San Antonio, the Texas Hill Country and in the festival's Web galleries. Free. <http://fotoseptiembreusa.com>

SEPT. 1-2: PEOPLE EN ESPAÑOL FESTIVAL

People en Español will bring its festival event, celebrating Latino culture and entertainment, to San Antonio on Sept. 1 and 2. A weekend celebration of the hottest in Latino culture featuring concerts, celebrity appearances, family activi-

ties, workshops and more, the People en Español Festival is an annual event that will relocate from New York City to San Antonio for the first time. Festival San Antonio will now become a destination weekend for all things celebrating Latino heritage and culture.

SEPT. 9-10 AND 16: DIEZ Y SEIS EVENTS

Marking Mexico's independence from Spain, San Antonio celebrates Sept. 16 with special events all over town, including a street parade with floats and marching bands, a gala, Market Square celebrations, festivals, dance presentations and other special activities. www.sanantonio.gov/marketsquare

SEPT. 12-13: TASTE OF THE RIVER WALK

Ticketholders enjoy sampling culinary offerings from 20 participating River Walk establishments from 6 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. Afterward, all partygoers are encouraged to go to the post-party.

SEPT. 22-23: JAZZ'SALIVE

Some of the nation's top jazz entertainers, along with regional and local talent, take over Travis Park and dazzle the crowd with their smooth sounds. Free. www.saparks-foundation.org/jazzsalive.html

OCT. 5-6 AND 11-13: OKTOBERFEST SAN ANTONIO

Head over to Beethoven Halle und Garten to celebrate the ultimate German festival! Music, food and dancing, plus German specialties like bratwurst, reubens and beer will be available to help put you in the spirit! Suggested donation is \$5 at the gate. www.beethovenmaennerchor.com

OCT. 20: CHOCOLATE & WINE FESTIVAL OF TEXAS

Join us at the Kendall County Fairgrounds in Boerne for a day of total indulgence at Texas' only Chocolate & Wine Festival. The festival features