

# Pop-up art show 'Cancel COVID' spotlights local work created amid pandemic

By Devon Jackson For The New Mexican | Mar 11, 2022 Updated Mar 14, 2022



Photographer Don Usner, right, shows fellow artist Andrea Allen prints he will have on display at the *Cancel COVID* art show opening Saturday in the Railyard District.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican



Painter Mohsin Mulk straightens one of his paintings in preparation for the *Cancel COVID* art show opening Saturday in the Railyard District.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

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## If You Go

**What:** *Cancel COVID*, a pop-up art show of works created by Santa Fe artists during the pandemic.

**When:** Saturday through March 26.

**Where:** 818 Camino Sierra Vista in the Railyard District.

John Barker said it was Anna Celander's idea. Celander said it was Barker who dreamed up *Cancel COVID*, a pop-up art show opening Saturday in Barker's studio in the Railyard District.

The idea, which emerged just six weeks ago, brought together Barker and nine other Santa Fe artists who will showcase works created in the last two years, during pandemic-related lockdowns and surges in the virus, including the recent omicron spike that has since waned. The project aims to spotlight local artists who aren't well-known and pieces that emerged in a time of isolation.

"I'd love to do a pop-up show once a month," Barker said, "and include people who aren't represented in galleries. And give them exposure."

Barker, an abstract painter who owns Barker Management, a property management company, said Celander is managing the show.

"It was her idea to go to Instagram, which I thought was really clever," he said.

Several artists participating in the show were discovered on Instagram, a growing trend in the art world.

Barker, who studied at the University of New Mexico, said he spent time in New York City assisting artists like Rudi Stern and Larry Poons. He also worked at Walt Disney Studios in Los Angeles before returning to Santa Fe in 1995. Shortly afterward, he and his brother, David Barker, took over his father's real estate company.

While his work is sometimes compared to 1920s German expressionists, Barker calls his art "distractionism."

Andrea Allen, a Texas native who came to Santa Fe five years ago to attend the now-defunct Santa Fe University of Art and Design and finished her degree at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, said "it was all very quick," the way the *Cancel COVID* show came together.

Other artists in the show have lived in the city far longer.

Mohsin Mulk, an abstract painter, has been in Santa Fe since 1994, while Bob Richardson has been here since the late 1960s.

"I'm a landscaper during the summer," Mulk said. "So I paint as much as I can, especially in the winter when it's slow."

He added, "It's my first professional show, and it's a spectacular opportunity to get to know more artists. I love to get in touch with more of my peers and with like-minded people."

One of the bigger names in the show is Don Usner, whose black-and-white photos have appeared in numerous books and magazines. Usner, though, has never been in a show.

Usner's office is in the same building as Barker's. "We have a mutual admiration for each other's work," Usner said.

"I always want to get my work out there," he added. "And this was something different, less formal. It's an eclectic group. So I thought, why not?"

It's that "why not" spirit that drew Barker to Instagram and its artists. "It's energy," he said. "When we started looking at Instagram, the energy grew on us."



Painter Andrea Allen makes sure her paintings are level in preparation for the *Cancel COVID* art show opening Saturday in the Railyard District.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican