

Three shows to catch before they close

Spotlight On Art

July is whooshing past faster than cars on a NASCAR speedway.

Zoom! Went June - and July is a mere pit stop on the race to finish 2010.

So if people say, "There's nothing to do in Trinidad," they had better get out of the way before they are run over by the crowds streaming into theatres, galleries, restaurants, music festivals and concerts crowding the summer calendar.



Cynthia Berresse Ploski
Special to The Chronicle-News

Three art shows currently on exhibition are too good to miss, so you'd better take them in before July yields to the August lap around the zodiac.

The first to close, on July 24, will be the Kirt Kempter photography show at the First Street Gallery. These huge "geomosaic" photographs of amazing landforms and iconic sites around the world startle the eye and impact the mind with their outstanding clarity and unusual viewpoints. Macchu Picchu appears to be photographed from mid air, a snow-clad mountain range in Antarctica from prone position on tundra, and Bryce Canyon seems like it was photographed from a perch on one of the pinnacles.

From macrocosm to microcosm, the intimate photographs of riverbed rocks and interesting formations clearly chronicle their geologic origins, and bear evidence of Kempter's training as a geologist.

The "geo" of Geomosaics bespeaks that training, and the "mosaic" part refers to taking many photographs of the same subject at miniscule changes of angles and exposures to "stitch together

Howl, who grew up in Tulsa, Okla., stumbled into an adult oil painting class when she was in the fifth grade and synchronistically discovered her calling as a painter. As if fate hadn't finished with her, a temporary survival job in a cabinet shop opened her eyes to another love affair - his time with wood. Her workshop in an old brick building out-



Photos by Cynthia Berresse Ploski

Kirt Kempter stands next to his photograph of Macchu Picchu, apparently taken from midair.

While the army has a reasonable need for such a practice range, local ranchers, joined by artists and Southern Colorado residence believe there are other places better suited for the army's needs. Therefore, they joined together as a coalition to fight the Army's expansion efforts.

It is unusual for artists to use their craft as a battering ram, but in this case, art and artists have contributed energetically to the cause. Among their efforts with the Coalition Against Expansion has been raising funds through art sales and displays of work portraying the Piñon Canyon area in its natural beauty.

Sales of paintings in the Special showing of "The Piñon Canyon Experience" will be a way for those artists who actually painted on site to benefit the Piñon Canyon Expansion Opposition Coalition.

These local art exhibitions, showcasing local and regional talent, are of a quality equal to that which one might see in Albuquerque or Denver.

Don't let July fly by without taking



Karen Howl enjoys showing guests her custom cabinets.

side of Trinidad and is always filled with special orders for custom, beautifully crafted furniture and small wood items. When she has time, she switches aprons to oil painting, producing the beautifully crafted work for which she receives wide acclaim. Peering out from the canvas surface, those old Native American women lovingly tending farm animals seem to glow with wisdom and dignity.

Workshops are their homes for the other designing women, a blending together of life and craft.

Max Michaels creates wheel-thrown vessels with radiant glazes, popular with collectors for their graceful beauty and usefulness.

Judy Fuentes makes beads, plates and crucifixes for wall decoration from dichroic and other kinds of glass. Dichroic glass is fused with many layers of metallic oxides to result in shimmering, light-filled reflective surfaces.

The weavings of Joan Archuleta, Bonnie Julsen and Barbara McKnight exhibit both traditional and contemporary designs, using yarns dyed in both traditional and contemporary colors.

The small entry fee to the A.R. Mitchell Museum of Western Art will entitle you to view these lovely and useful items, displayed on the mezzanine floor, as well as investigate the entry level museum. On this first floor visitors can see paintings by Trinidad's own A.R. Mitchell, plus exhibits of Anasazi artifacts and Hispanic/Penitente art and artifacts.

At the Corazon Gallery, a special showing entitled "The Piñon Canyon Experience" will remain open to the public free of charge for the remainder of July.

This 44-painting exhibition of landscapes created by Doug Holdread and his students from plein air workshops in scenic Piñon Canyon, presents that embattled area through the eyes of artists.

More suited to be a National Park than an Army live fire artillery practice range, the Piñon Canyon area of rangeland, canyons, rivers, archeological sites and historic locations has been in the private hands of ranchers for generations. In the past couple of years the Army has petitioned to annex a large portion of it to expand their live fire practice range.



Carolyn Schatzman's painting of Doug Holdread, flute player serenading a Piñon Canyon dawn.

er" the image into startling detail.

Albuquerque native Kirt Kempter comes from a family of musical achievers, and has brought his own talents into focus as a photographer and trainer, hired by NASA to teach astronauts how to perform geologic mapping of rocks in their context, on the moon or Mars.

When you go to see the show, you'll be pleased to remember that admission to the First Street Gallery is free.

At the Mitchell Museum of Western Art, the show "Designing Women" will run until Aug. 15, having opened July 1 at a grand fête typical of celebratory art openings of "The Mitch." It features the work of Karen Howl, wood-crafter and painter par excellence. Other women rounding out the artistic design are Max Michaels, ceramics; Judy Fuentes, fused glass; and Joan Archuleta, Bonnie Julsen and Barbara McKnight, weavers.

Veteran actor returns to Shuler summer stage

By **TIM KELLER**
The Chronicle-News

For actor J. Michael Craig, a mutual love affair with audiences began in his native Greenville, S.C., with a banjo and a smile.

Craig was seven years old and had just joined a bluegrass band, playing parking lot concerts and parties. At one point in an early performance, he made a big face and the audience erupted in laughter. It was a revelation.

Craig remained in the band until he was 18, playing the comic along with the banjo.

He left for college with a drama scholarship after his 1972 high school graduation, but soon dropped out. "I wasn't ready to go through college," he recalls. "Besides, I was already acting." The veteran is currently in his fifth consecutive summer season of repertory at Raton's Shuler Theater, playing featured roles in God's Man in Texas, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, and Neil Simon's farce, Fools.



For his first five years on the stage, Craig was a dancer and singer in musicals, beginning with Amahl and the Night Visitors in 8th grade. From there, he went to the Greenville Little Theater in Hello, Dolly. Then

two important things happened: he met a priest, and a new theater opened in Greenville.

Father Michael Kaney would have been called a radical priest in South Carolina. Craig played banjo in Kaney's newfangled folk masses. "Father Kaney was the first person to ever tell me that I had a right to better myself, and to go as far as I wanted in music and acting," Craig recalls. "He told me that I didn't need anyone else's permission to become all I could be. No one had ever told me that before. It changed a lot for me."

Craig took to stage acting with a new focus and passion just as Greenville's Warehouse Theater was founded. "It was upstairs from the city auditorium. When the circus was in town, they housed the animals downstairs from the theater." For the first

Photo by Tim Keller

Veteran actor J. Michael Craig is again spending his summer in Raton, acting in three plays at the Shuler Theater.

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Veteran actor returns to Shuler summer stage

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time, Greenville had a theater "that would tackle new plays, plays no one previously would have thought to do." It provided Craig new opportunities, and he liked it.

His focus quickly shifted to dramatic acting. "I have a different look, a character look. I always wanted to do classical acting - Marlowe, Shakespeare - and the Warehouse suddenly gave me those opportunities," Craig says. The venerable theater just finished its 36th season. Craig will return in December to play his 16th role there, as the Devil in C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*.

This summer's *Fools* is also his 16th role at The Shuler Theater. The two facts are related:

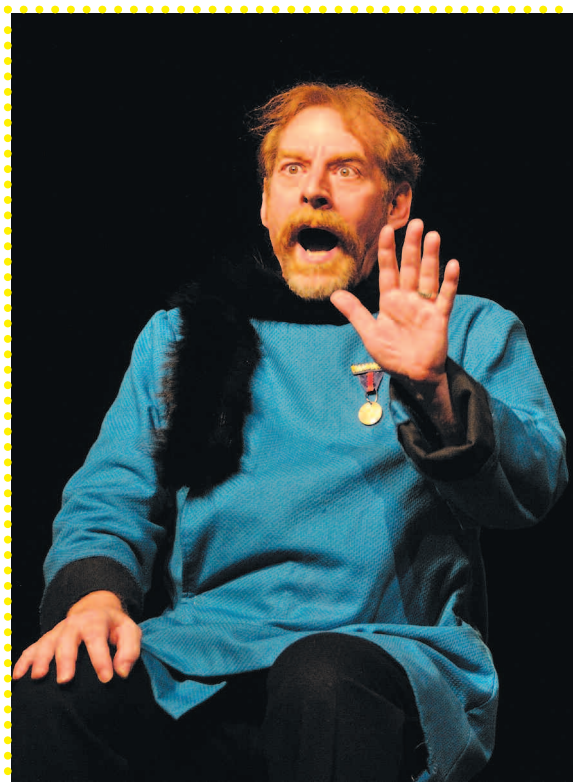
In South Carolina's theatre world, Craig is a big fish in a small pond. He's regularly asked to take roles and never required to audition. It's not a situation he's comfortable with. "I like to reach, and to strive," he says. "I love change, and I embrace it. It frees me." His search for new theaters and experiences brought him to Raton.

It wasn't the first time he'd fled South Carolina to break free of a comfortable rut. He spent the 1980s living in New York City. "Because we weren't union, everything had to be showcase," he recalls. "We'd rent the theater

into the boiler every morning at 5:30, and he sometimes ran the elevator. The first two floors were occupied by a Japanese school of martial arts, tea ceremonies, and flower arranging. The school's director insisted that Craig join him every afternoon for a glass of sake. "I've been a confirmed sake drinker for 31 years now," he smiles.

For three years, he worked days at the Metropolitan Opera and nights at *TIME Magazine*. All the while, he attended countless plays and acted in as many as he could.

Eventually, he abandoned small fish/big pond in NYC to return to big fish/small pond in Greenville, though he's long ventured out to work in movies, 25 or 30 of them over the years, none of which you're likely to have



Photos by Tim Keller

In his role as Dr. Zubritsky in Neil Simon's farce "Fools," Craig draws inspiration from the spirit of Mel Brooks.

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Craig, left, plays the famous but aging pastor of a mega-church in the drama, "God's Man in Texas."

ater and produce our own shows, doing all the promotion and sales. You'd hope the critics would come, that one day you'd be 'discovered.'"

He supported himself with a succession of day jobs. As a building superintendent, he had to shovel coal

heard of. He has some great movie stories, including one of sharing cheap beer with Keith Carradine in a pup tent beside a motel in a raging rain in the middle of the night in Clayton, Ga.

Nowadays, Craig works full-time as a stage actor, performing in 9-10 roles around the country each year. "I use my short-term memory a lot. That gets a workout. I keep the lines through the production, but then they're gone, because I have to move on to the next role."

His search for change and challenge could lead to this being his last season of summer repertory at the

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Griego-McLaughlin Engagement

Charles and Frances Griego would like to announce the engagement of their daughter, Joanna, to John McLaughlin, son of Richard and Karen McLaughlin of Butte, Montana. The couple will celebrate an October wedding.