

INTRODUCING...

BY KAREN L. KIRSCH

Barbara Meikle

Tesuque artist finds solace in painting burros



ELENA GOMEZ

Artist Barbara Meikle visits with her neighbor's burro, El Burrito, in Tesuque. She is the founder of the Pippin-Meikle Gallery in Santa Fe and founding partner of Artistas de Santa Fe Gallery. Meikle has a new exhibit of her work at Pippin-Meikle Gallery, which runs through mid-April.

TO KNOW DONKEYS (AKA BURROS) is to love them, but if one only knew them from depictions of forlorn creatures hitched to carts or overloaded with some nebulous cargo they'd never guess the animals' intelligent mischievous nature or loving personality.

Barbara Meikle knows and loves donkeys and it shows in her bold paintings. The co-founder of Pippin-Meikle Gallery in Santa Fe and founding partner of Artistas de Santa Fe Gallery also paints horses and old cars, but it's her striking burro portraits that command international attention. "People just love my donkey paintings," she says. They hang on walls across America, France, Germany and even Afghanistan.

Meikle's donkey paintings hang across the globe, including the United States, France, Germany and Afghanistan.

At right is *Backseat Driver*, a 36-by-36-inch oil on canvas. Meikle calls her style Expressive Impressionism, a mix of big brush strokes and lots of color. At far right is *Winter Coat*, a 14-by-11-inch oil on canvas.



Born and raised in Albuquerque, Meikle always knew she would be an artist and her passion for horses was obvious early on. Mucking out stables just to be around them and to afford riding lessons provided her with a solid understanding of equine conformation and spirit. "It's very important to have grounding," she says.

While exhibiting her work a few years ago in Colorado she became totally smitten with the donkeys at Long Hopes Donkey Shelter (www.longhopes.org) "I still go at least once a year to paint, photograph and communicate with them."

Working with oil paint, big brushes and lots of color she describes her style as Expressive Impressionism. "I incorporate colors that express the spirit and joy of the animal but also look like the animal," she says. A typical work takes about three months to complete and may cost from \$450 to \$4,000.

Lady, a white jennet at the shelter was a particular favorite. Meikle painted and drew her so often she knew she had to own her. "I phoned the shelter and learned that I was a week too late. She'd already been adopted," she recalls sadly, but she hasn't given up. She and her husband, Bill, currently live and ride their horses and mule in Tesuque, but they hope to soon adopt a couple of donkeys from Long Hopes. For those who can't own the real thing, a burro on the wall might be the next best thing. 

