

Think small

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
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Tiny Art is coming to Gallup

If Gallup's murals are her wardrobe, Tiny Art will be her accessories.

gallupARTS and Gallup MainStreet are partnering to bring Tiny Art to town this spring with a project to turn unsightly bits of infrastructure into beautiful little surprises.

As a movement, Tiny Art is about putting little spots of art in unexpected places. That takes different forms in different communities; Gallup will follow the model of the Itty Bitty Art project in Boulder, Colo., in which local artists took on small projects to repair urban wear and tear with art.

"They took blemishes in the environment like cracks or missing tiles and they had artists creatively intervene to beautify it," GallupARTs Executive Director Rose Eason said.

Some pieces involve painted designs on otherwise unsightly infrastructure like exposed pipes or cracked walls; others are more sculptural, 3D installations. All of them are small.

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The projects aren't meant to fill in sinkholes or repair crumbling infrastructure. Instead, they're intended to spark joy and wonder at small, ordinary things. Artists might fill sidewalk cracks with mosaic materials or replace cracked tiles or missing fence post finials with small, artistic flourishes.

"They are meant to be surprising and whimsical, kind of unexpected. You're not trying to do something big and grand. Just something super creative and original and delightful," Eason said.

She hopes to put out a request for proposals this month, have a selection committee review and city signoff in February, then have artists working through March to be ready for a dispersed Tiny Art unveiling to coincide with this year's first Arts Crawl April 8. It will even include a scavenger hunt.

To choose the project targets, Eason walked downtown with Michael Bullock, director of the Gallup MainStreet Arts & Cultural District, looking for "blemishes in the built environment." For the first round all of the targets are on city property and affected city departments have all cleared them for makeover.

The six items identified for tiny-artification are parking meter "stubs" on the curb outside of Jerry's Café; a missing finial on the fencepost along the Sammy C's parking lot at Third Street and Aztec Avenue; missing tiles on the El Morro Theatre facade (pending historic building review); a light post base at the corner of Fourth Street and Aztec Avenue; planters at the Cultural Center; and missing brick in the Courthouse Square bench wall. The results are meant to remain in place for a long time.

The project is part of a statewide effort by arts advocacy group Creative New Mexico that will see art organizations in nine other cities doing their own projects to showcase the value of arts in communities.

"There's so many roles art can play. Sometimes it's great to have art be serious and identify serious issues and engage with those," Eason said. "Sometimes it's fun to just have it be super beautiful. Sometimes it's fun to have it be just totally wacky."

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If Tiny Art is well received, GallupARTS plans to do it again in future years.

“This could grow into an even bigger project in the future,” Bullock said. “There’s a lot of potential places to fix. Just small little things but I think they can make a big difference.”

To see a gallery of Golden, Colo.’s 14 Itty Bitty Art projects go to:

<https://www.cityofgolden.net/play/recreation-attractions/public-art/itty-bitty-art/> .

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