

American Airlines 

Celebrated Living

EXCLUSIVELY FOR PREMIUM CABINS

SANTA FE FLAVOR

FOOD, ART
AND DESIGN IN
THE LAND OF
ENCHANTMENT



BRAZIL'S
ARTISANAL
COFFEE
CULTURE

DELECTABLE
DINING
AROUND
LONDON

THE 2019
PLATINUM
LIST
NOMINATIONS

MAY/JUNE 2019

SOUTHWESTERN

EXPOSURE



Long a haven for artistic types, **Santa Fe** beguiles visitors with its creativity, audacity and sense of discovery

WORDS MICHAEL SHULMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY MATT CONANT

Founded in 1609 by Spanish colonialists, Santa Fe translates into “Holy Faith,” and more than 400 years later, residents remain passionate about their city—the oldest state capital in the United States. Local hospitality can border on the pathological: It is not unusual for a waiter at one of Santa Fe’s finer dining establishments to eulogize a meal he enjoyed at another restaurant, or for a hotelier to rave to a guest about accommodations across town.

But in the City Different, as it is called, that difference proves to be exceptional. Alongside the signature Southwestern design—rooms painted in earth tones with contrasting shots of turquoise, garnished with Talavera pottery and striped serapes—many of the city’s exquisite features have risen from Santa Fe’s idiosyncratic personality and sense of community. From large-format art and exotic decor to equine encounters and savory moles, we investigate four experiences that capture the spirit of Santa Fe.



THE HOTEL

In the heart of downtown Santa Fe, enclosing a maze of courtyards, a 400-year-old adobe and river-rock compound conceals an ornate interior that seems to have sprung from the tales of Scheherazade. “In a world where cultural heritage is endangered, we have made it our life’s work to support artisans overseas while incorporating the handcrafted art of the Silk Road in furnishings and interior design,” says Sylvia Seret, the artist who, with designer husband



Ira and Sylvia Seret at Seret & Sons. Far left: The Lensic Performing Arts Center. Below: The Lapis Suite at The Inn of the Five Graces

Previous spread, from left: New Mexico chilis; J. Scott Strachan and Kelly Wendorf with Brio and Cimarron at the Equus Experience at Thunderbird Ridge



Ira, created the romantic Inn of the Five Graces.

Frankly, it shouldn't work. And yet this seemingly incongruous fusion of East and West is a triumph. Among the decorative touches employed in the design are carved marble screens from India (some of which date to the 18th century), hand-painted antique Tibetan cabinets, embroidered Uzbek curtains and a phenomenal lapis lazuli mosaic ceiling with inlaid stars designed by Ira, from which hangs a Robert Kaindl glass chandelier. Then

you meet the couple, who opened the hotel in the mid 1990s, and everything makes sense.

A protégé of legendary *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland, Ira introduced the Western world to Afghan sheepskin coats through a collaboration with designer Anne Klein. When he and Sylvia met in the early 1970s, she was designing hand-stitched velvet coats. After marrying and living in Afghanistan and New York, the pair decamped in 1979 to Santa Fe, then an emerging hub for artists, and established Seret >

& Sons, a purveyor of sublime Silk Road furnishings and accessories. More than a decade later, the couple opened The Inn of the Five Graces, where everything begs to be touched, admired or—in the case of breakfast in the courtyard, or the cookies at turndown—tasted.

"I'm proud that ours is a family-owned hotel, which is becoming rarer these days," says Ira. "Sylvia and I conceived the hotel to showcase our combined artistry, and our youngest son, Sharif, developed and fashioned the property into the award-winning

luxury hotel it's become." The closest you'll ever get to sleeping inside Ali Baba's cave, the inn offers guests a rare opportunity to luxuriate in color-saturated multiculturalism, while enjoying the incredible furnishings created by Seret & Sons mere minutes away.

THE GALLERY

"Fine art has been a constant thread that's central to Santa Fe's culture and economy," says gallerist Nedra Matteucci. Art played a major role in the city's



"FINE ART IS A CONSTANT THREAD THAT'S CENTRAL TO SANTA FE'S CULTURE."

Clockwise: Gallerist Nedra Matteucci; artworks and furnishings at the Nedra Matteucci Galleries; the sculpture garden featuring Glenna Goodacre's *Jill*

evolution over the past century, she says, and recent growth in quality and range has built Santa Fe into a leading market. Occupying a historic compound of pueblos downtown, the Nedra Matteucci Galleries has specialized for more than four decades in 19th- and 20th-century American art, with a focus ranging from the Taos Society of Artists and the impressionist schools to contemporary artists who evoke the spirit of the modern West.

But unlike many galleries where the building is meant to recede into the background, the setting here is part of the story. This is especially apparent >

BOTTOM RIGHT: COURTESY OF NEDRA MATTEUCCI GALLERIES

when you cross a threshold that leads from one of the painting rooms to the sculpture garden outside—your first thought might well be that you have landed in Narnia.

The one-acre oasis melds art and the environment, with large-scale bronze sculptures integrated into the setting. Bodie, the gallery's resident beagle, saunters past Dan Ostermiller's joyful *Rearing Elephant* (1998), which stands frozen mid-frolic at a watering hole, while in another nook of the garden, David Wynne's *Girl With Doves* (1970) looks skyward, projecting hope.



"Opening the garden became a primary goal for me," says Matteucci. "Just walking through it and observing the sculptures brings me tremendous pleasure."

THE RESTAURANT

Chef Fernando Olea's restaurants have delighted the palates of Santa Fe foodies for almost three decades. In 2015, after launching a handful of eateries celebrating the cuisine of Mexico, he opened Sazón, an award-winning evocation of the country's gastronomic traditions as well as one of the region's finest *mezcalerías*. While dishes here range from timbales with Mandarin habanero foam to stuffed poblano peppers with ground lamb, Olea's signature New Mexican mole remains one of the most asked-about items on the menu.

Olea created the sauce in 2009 to commemorate the city's 400th

Chef Fernando Olea. Above left: Dining room featuring a painting of the ingredients in Olea's New Mexican mole by Federico de la Vega



anniversary. "Moles had been prepared in New Mexico for centuries—families brought their recipes with them from Mexico," he says. "But nobody had ever created a *New Mexican mole*. So I vowed to create one in honor of

this celebration." Not knowing what ingredients to use, he began scouring the state for ideas. "I traveled to Socorro, where they were having a harvest of pecans, which became the first ingredient in my New Mexican mole. And >



The exterior of Sazón restaurant, with a horse sculpture by Suri Hollander

the pecans made me think about the *piñon* nuts that we have in the northern part of the state. But I was still missing that central element to the mole, the one that would bind all of the ingredients."

Diners at Sazón—which earned AAA's Four Diamond Award—sample local seasonal ingredients in dishes as varied as corn truffle *huitlacoche* on mini tortillas and black pepper-encrusted Angus beef tenderloin. Paintings by Mexican artists depicting foodstuffs fill the room. And each evening, meat or seafood specials are bathed in one of Olea's delectable moles: negro, poblano, *coloradito* or New Mexican.

A visit to a street vendor in San Felipe Pueblo inspired the latter's "fantastic" ingredient: apricots. "So I started putting my ingredients together, and then

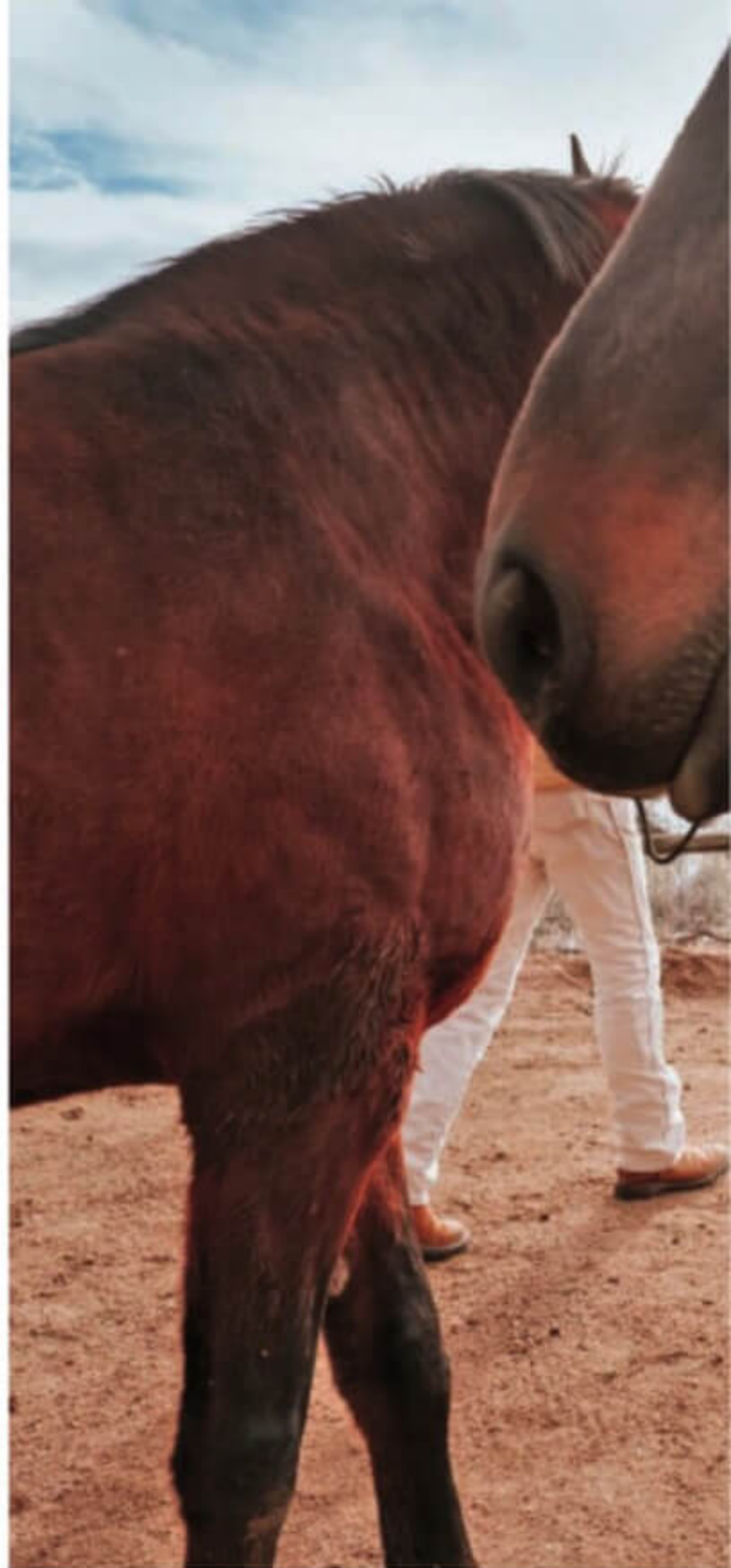
realized that if I was creating a New Mexican mole, it needed a New Mexican chili," Olea says. He selected the local Chimayo chili, but faced a tough decision: "When it's fresh, it's green, but when it's dry, it turns red, and the flavor is completely different. But the green didn't play with the other ingredients, so I chose the dry red chili. And that was the inspiration for my New Mexican mole."

THE EXPERIENCE

When Betty Egan bought the Rancho del Monte dude ranch in 1967—and reopened it as Rancho Encantado a year later—she had no idea that her 57-acre retreat at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains would attract the likes of James Stewart, the Dalai Lama and Princess Grace of Monaco. A



Mole sampling at Sazón. Right: Wendorf at the Equus Experience



half-century later, the property is known as the Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado Santa Fe, a 65-room luxury retreat packed with clever amenities. The Encantado Suite—the highest point on the property—offers majestic mountain views. A personal butler tends to an in-suite fireplace and offers a DIY s'mores kit (complete with sharpened sticks). And for guests who want to hit the historic Turquoise Trail, the resort's partnership with Mercedes-Benz will allow you to zip along in a



“HORSES HAVE PARTICULARLY LARGE NERVOUS SYSTEMS THAT ALERT THEM TO MINUTE EXTERNAL CUES.”

jaunty convertible roadster.

The most memorable experience, perhaps, is located a short but beautiful hike away from the resort, at Thunderbird Ridge. There, bordering the property of Egan's former home (where local shamans have located two spiritual vortexes),

co-founders Kelly Wendorf and J. Scott Strachan have launched a horse-assisted self-empowerment program, Equus.

Over the past 50 million years, horses have evolved into one of the planet's most successful animals, based on a combination of

a highly developed flight response and a powerful herding instinct. They are genetically predisposed to elude predators, and maintain order through the use of subtle communication.

“All mammals' nervous systems are attuned to and influence one another,” Wendorf says. “We have neurons that many scientists believe assist in empathy and understanding ‘the message below the message.’ As animals of prey, horses have particularly sensitive and large nervous systems that alert them to the most minute external cues. >



It's this elegantly honed neural network that responds to the participants in the arena."

In other words, horses have the ability to "read" the energy of those around them. "This enables them to reflect back at us who we are, minus the story we tell ourselves," she says. Also, unlike humans, a horse doesn't dwell on the past or worry about the future—their reality is based firmly in the here-and-now, something we all could use a bit more of.

At the paddock this morning, a half-dozen beautiful horses and an adorable donkey, Kassie, hang around looking relaxed. Strachan explains that horses are attuned to the energy of their surroundings, take note of the creatures around them and act accordingly.

A 15-year-old Appaloosa, Cimarron, trots over to play, while the 20-year-old alpha mare, Artemis, is so laid-back she takes a nap on her belly. Brio, a spectacular nine-year-old Lusitano, whinnies, gets on his back and wriggles his legs in the air.



Above: Strachan at the Equus Experience at Thunderbird Ridge

When it's time to pick a partner for the leadership exercises, Strachan invites me to walk Brio across the paddock. "C'mon, Brio," I say, but Brio isn't budging. Strachan uses this moment to demonstrate the difference between a power-over dynamic versus a power-with; as herd animals, horses react favorably to the latter (and ignore the former). He instructs me to stand alongside Brio and look at the spot where

I want to go, and Brio will walk with me. He does. At one point, I stand opposite Brio, make a *tchk-tchk* sound and call his name. He trots over and lowers his head to be scratched behind his ears.

It's a fascinating day, and I leave feeling curiously empowered. Brio didn't only provide lessons in leadership and group dynamics, but also made me wonder whether I could still ask my parents for a horse in my mid 40s. *CL*