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BY RACHEL PRESTON



A ROAD LIKE NO OTHER

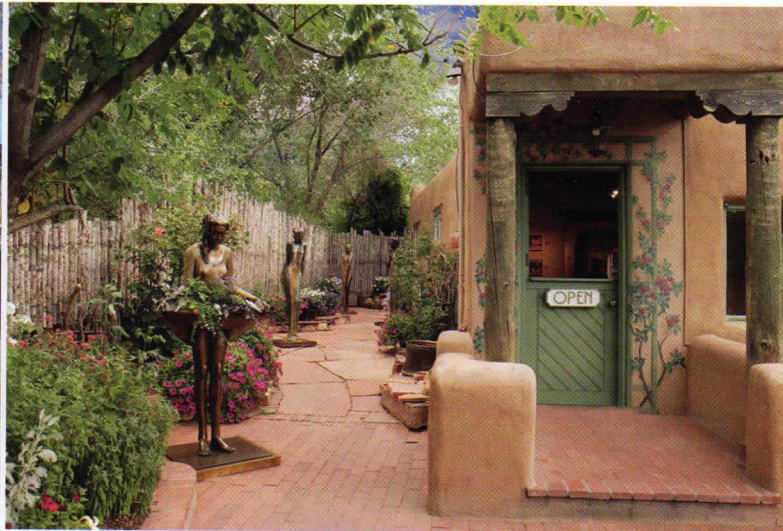
A crucible of old and new, Canyon Road remains unique among art districts

Daffodils and crocus bursting into sunlight mark the arrival of spring as Santa Fe's Canyon Road begins to stir from a long, cold winter. Gardens are cleared of debris, heaping piles of snow are shoveled into the sunlight, and a glowing warmth emanates from nearly every shop window at the prospect of another tourist season. But it is always spring, in some sense, on Canyon Road. A wild profusion of artwork blooms along the street and up the alleyways, no matter the season.

The real bread and butter of many Canyon Road businesses is the relationships built over many years between gallery owners and art collectors, who visit most often in early fall. Day to day, some of the galleries are busy working with interior designers. But it is the throngs of summertime tourists who bring this narrow road to life, their pilgrimage underlining the special qualities of a destination unlike any other.

One of Santa Fe's eight historic neighborhoods, Canyon Road was the first Residential Arts and Crafts district in the nation, recognized in 1962. Since then, its successful marriage of historic preservation, architectural design, and fine art has inspired new ways of

KATE RUSSELL



Left to right: David Phelps's *Daydreamer* at Hahn Ross Gallery; the entrance to Patricia Carlisle Fine Art; Winterowd Fine Art. Opposite: Sculptures mark the entrance to the complex of galleries at 225 Canyon Road.

approaching urban design. New Mexico's Main Street program, among others nationwide, has used Canyon Road as a model for preserving significant historic structures while allowing them to be used in a vital and sustainable way, as live-work space for local artists—the engines of urban renewal. Such an approach has the not-insignificant benefit of feeding the tourism coffer, which has been the most visible catalyst for the success of Canyon Road.

Originally a trail used by indigenous people to cross the mountains from Pecos Pueblo, Canyon Road became the first farming area outside the city center after Spanish settlement in the 1600s. Home to modest family farms, it also had bodegas, dance halls, and general stores selling everything from hardware to hay. As families expanded, rooms were added, creating vast compounds.

Painter Gerald Cassidy, who arrived in 1914, would be the first artist to settle in the neighborhood permanently, at 1000 Canyon Road. Many others followed in search of healing at the nearby Sunmount Sanitorium. In 1919, young Fremont Ellis moved to Santa Fe to experience the “interesting and important artists” assembling there, along with four other new arrivals: Josef Bakos, Walter Mruk, Willard Nash, and Will Shuster. In 1920 they formed the famed Cinco Pintores (Five Painters), the heart of which was in the artists' homes on Canyon Road.

As Santa Fe expanded and taxes rose with property values, many of the early family compounds were sold off, disassembled, and reconfigured for a new caste of artists who lived and worked and showed their work in their front rooms. Today, few vestiges of the neighborhood's Hispanic roots remain, while some of those who came seeking relief from tuberculosis and other ailments in the early 20th century boast multi-generational presences. Artists who have remained since the 1950s make up a segment of the

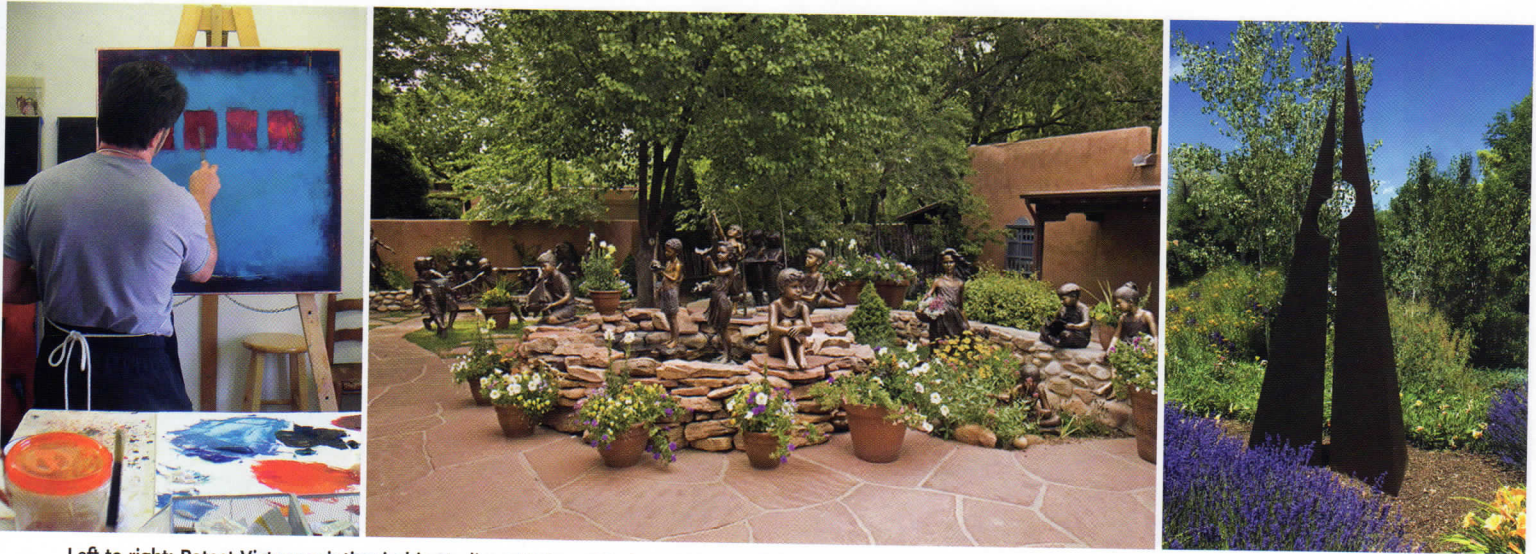
Canyon Road is at once ancient, established, traditional—and modern, unconventional, and bold.

community, a magnet for younger artists and gallery owners who have started their own establishments. Finally, there is the odd arrival who was brought in search of a dream, as in the case of Mary Bonney, who brought the William and Joseph Gallery to Santa Fe after Hurricane Katrina. Thus Canyon Road is at once ancient, established, traditional—and modern, unconventional, and bold.

Its galleries are not anonymous structures that could be dropped into the urban fabric of Seattle, Dallas, or Atlanta. They are old buildings with a rich history, some of them still artists' homes. Visitors take in the paintings and sculpture set in cozy home settings that reflect the tastes of gallery owners themselves. The ubiquitous fireplaces and courtyard fountains echo the energy, warmth, and movement of human creativity, setting the stage for unexpected intimacy and magical conversation. Every so often a dirt drive reconnects new to old, where a sign reading PRIVATE RESIDENCE serves as a reminder of the neighborhood's growing families.

As cool mornings give way to warm spring days, tourists clutching maps and art guides head up the road from Paseo de Peralta to try to find their way through the milieu. With nearly 80 galleries, Canyon Road represents almost every artistic leaning, from Taos Society and Native American to international contemporary, fantasy, and even “junk” art. Visiting every interesting spot on this mile-long stretch of road packed with galleries and stores makes for an exhausting prospect, and is best spread out over several leisurely days.

Most visits begin at the “low” end, closest to town, at a gallery called the Edge. This Santa Fe—modern structure makes an enticing introduction to the vast range of contemporary art represented in Canyon Road galleries. Angelic sculptures by William Catling dance around the outside, as if invoking the genius loci—the Roman “spirit of place.” Around the curve, the first alleys and courtyards unfurl from the road with a growing parade of sculptures.



Left to right: Poteet Victory painting in his studio at McLarry Modern; Meyer Gallery's sculpture garden; Paula Ziegen's *Lunar Pulse* sculpture at Karan Ruhlen

After the commercial frenzy of the Santa Fe Plaza, the Adobe Gallery offers a soothingly large, beautifully arranged space in which to give contemporary and antique Southwest pottery the honor of unhurried viewing.

The collection of stores and galleries at 225 Canyon Road, sometimes called the Rodeo Drive of Santa Fe, offers a modern introduction to the neighborhood's history. Originally designed with residential space above, most of these galleries have expanded their commercial space upstairs, giving the complex a boutique feel. The offerings here begin with contemporary abstract art at Karan Ruhlen, including New Mexico modernist painting and sculpture. Pauline Ziegen, a native of the Midwest, is one of the favorites here. Her oil and gold-leaf landscape panels stir the senses with their simplicity and luminescence.

Next door at Meyer Gallery, regional specialties speak to more conventional tastes: bronze and stone sculptures of Western figures, Native American images and playful children, as well as classically inspired realistic and impressionistic paintings by regional and national artists, including amusing animal portraits by Donald Wilson, bronzes by Tyson Snow, and Cary Henrie's eerily playful landscape collages. Traditional painting and sculpture across a variety of subjects is also found at McLarry Fine Art, whose 24 artists include the compelling sculptors Tim Cherry, John Coleman, J. G. Moore, and Tim Nicola.

Cheerful ceramic dinnerware, lamps, glass wall sculptures, and handmade sconces fill the popular La Mesa of Santa Fe, which overflows with home furnishings and artwork by more than 50 artists. At Karen Melfi Collection, clothing and jewelry reach the status of wearable art, with unique handmade textiles in Santa Fe style on one side of the store and chunky artisanal stones and precious metals on the other. One of the most distinctive features of Canyon Road is the direct interaction with artists and owners themselves, some of whom have been on the street for 30 years or more. At McLarry Modern in the 225 complex, I was introduced to the artist Poteet Victory and spent nearly half an hour talking with him in his upstairs studio as he worked on a painting. This

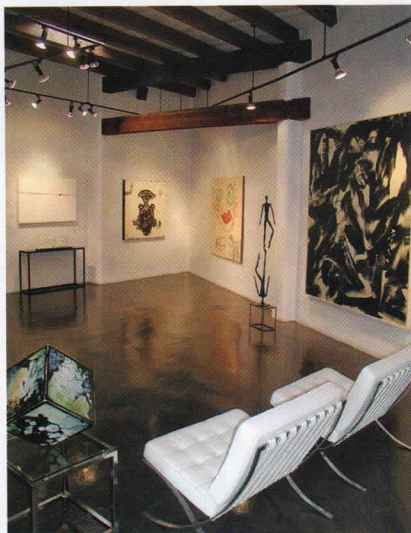
gallery feels much like a home, which makes it easy to linger here.

Across the street, a little red schoolhouse (as it was once actually known) offers a total contrast in setting. Ventana Fine Art, like many galleries on the lower half of the road, sits up above it in a raised garden. Canyon Road is thus cut into the earth as it heads downhill, creating a sense of grounding that is well typified by this gallery that has been here for nearly three decades. Traditional and contemporary art hung precisely throughout the rooms elevates the schoolhouse setting to downtown cool. Sales manager Wolfgang Mabry notes that some of the gallery's 20 or so artists have been with them since the beginning.

A totally different environment prevails at the Hahn Ross gallery, an intimate space introduced by David Phelps's monumental trompe l'oeil metal figures. The clean display of the front rooms features luminous abstract bamboo paintings by Chris Richter that seem to pop off the white walls, opposite glass-enclosed nichos lighting bronze sculptures on the wall opposite. Owned and operated by children's book illustrator Tom Ross and surrealist painter Elizabeth Hahn, the gallery shows about 20 nontraditional artists.

One of Canyon Road's oldest galleries is too easy to overlook, having none of the glamour and glitz of some of the newcomers. Former archaeologist Robert Nichols set up shop in the 1960s as a collector of Native pottery. As commercial frenzy began pushing Native potters toward increasingly elaborate designs to please the marketplace, Nichols decided to concentrate on a small number of iconoclastic potters. His rare collection of innovators includes Diego Romero, who paints "neo-Mimbres" pots with comic book imagery, and William Andrew Pacheco, of Santo Domingo Pueblo, whose black pots are swept with graceful dinosaurs in white. Both are graduates of the Institute of American Indian Arts, and thus represent the living evolution of tradition. Nichols, meanwhile, clearly has stuck to his first love: art, rather than commerce, a hallmark of Canyon Road's old-timers.

The carefully stabilized 18th-century residence and garden at 414 Canyon Road is now home to one of the area's newest artists, Mark White, with his impressive collection of mesmerizing kinetic



Left to right: Paul Shapiro and other artworks at GF Contemporary; humanist-themed work at Nuart Gallery; art opening at the Edge

sculpture designs, painted and patinated engravings, as well as bronze sculptural dancers created through a partnership with his son, Ethan, a professional dancer.

Three galleries in the next few blocks offer a study in contrasts, illustrating the personal touches that help visitors get in tune with their own tastes. Step up from the street into the Gaugy Gallery, and you are swept into an elegant living room with classical opera flooding the opulent 20th-century European environment. It's a

fitting showcase for the luminous painted panels of the gallery's namesake artist, Jean-Claude Gaugy.

At Patricia Carlisle's gallery up the road, jazz plays in the background, and the sun-dappled rooms and burbling exterior fountains give the feel of a Sunday afternoon in wine country. A group of clients is, in fact, sipping white wine in the grassy courtyard while listening to a gallery talk. Carlisle explains to a visitor that her approach differs from that of most galleries on the street, in

The Feast Begins with the Eyes, While Restaurants Keep the Rest Purring



Ahi tuna tomato salad with trout caviar

Nothing goes with fine art like a superb meal, an excellent glass of wine or a nice cup of tea, and the leisure to enjoy it. Not surprisingly, Canyon Road restaurants are designed to provide an atmospheric experience that matches the viewing of art.

Designed by the legendary Alexander Girard, who did New York's La Fonda del Sol restaurant, the Compound restaurant is housed in the original home of the McComb family and was purchased by the Hootens in the 1960s. Girard gave the space a distinctive look that would put the focus on the food, with unique two-person booths, curving ceilings that invoke thoughts of the sea, sparse decoration, and crisp white linens. Chef and partner Mark Kiffin bought and revitalized the Compound in 2000, with a focus on American contemporary cuisine based on a marriage of Spanish and regional ingredients. The elegant restaurant has won multiple recognitions, including being featured in *Gourmet* magazine's "Guide to America's Best Restaurants."

The now famous Geronimo restaurant, at 724 Canyon Road, is named for the building's original owner, Geronimo Lopez, one of the first settlers on Canyon Road. Since 1990, the historic home has provided the perfect backdrop for Geronimo's exceptional edible storytelling, with

its award-winning American and Southwest fusion menu presented in a classy and modern way by dedicated young partners and hosts Chris Harvey and Quinn Stephenson, of specialty drink fame, and innovative chef and partner Eric DiStefano.

Part of an extensive compound belonging to the Vigil family, El Farol restaurant, at 808 Canyon Road, has housed a bar since 1835. A bullet lodged in the wall attests to a time when the West was truly wild. The building was purchased and given its current name in 1968. In 1985, new owner David Salazar hatched the vision for a truly Spanish restaurant in Santa Fe. While the bar has long been known for its live music, and the restaurant for its extensive offering of tapas, it is the passion for flamenco dance, celebrated with art on the walls and a legendary cast of performers on Saturday nights, that sets El Farol apart.

Tourists and locals dot the garden tables, laughing and chatting the time away as writers and artists feverishly tap on laptops and sketch at the Teahouse, at 821 Canyon Road. With the motto "Where the East meets the Wild West," this restaurant and specialty store offers more than 300 teas from around the globe. Owner Dionne Christian and her staff have married a relaxing space with good tea and delicious food, a place to recoup from a long day of walking.

that her gallery represents only five or six artists at a time. The collection is thus strikingly coherent, and includes a large body of work by each artist. Slim bronze maidens by David Pearson, the only sculptor, mark the space inside and out like graceful sentinels. Carlisle's singular approach clearly works for her: She is marking her 14th year on Canyon Road.

Finally, the colorful 150-year-old adobe house at No. 622 features not only a yard full of sculptures, but paintings hung even on its exterior walls. Waxlander Gallery boasts 14 rooms and 30 regular artists, whose wild variety includes figurative, abstract, landscape, and sculpture. The vibe here is casual, confident—and why not, as owner Phyllis Kapp has been on the street for more than a quarter century—and the background music is classic pop rock. Many of the paintings here are as colorful and exuberant as the wild abstract landscapes by Kapp herself.

Heading back to the 500 block, a couple of historic structures are worth mentioning. Nedra Matteucci's stunningly appointed home—the Juan Jose Prada house, at 519 Canyon Road—exemplifies Santa Fe's Spanish-period architecture. It dates approximately to 1768 and is one of three Canyon Road residences in the Santa Fe Historic District on the National Register. Expertly preserved, it teases visitors to peek behind its landscaped garden wall and take in the flowers and ponds, with their modern sculpture interspersed among the fruit trees. Matteucci owns and operates the Nedra Matteucci Fenn Galleries on Paseo de Peralta, as well as Nedra Matteucci Fine Art and the Morning Star Gallery next door to her home, known for their impeccable collections of Taos Society and Native American art. Morning Star's Vanessa Elmore has recognized a new niche for her clients, offering a collection aimed at new collectors, with affordable, quality pieces chosen to get young people "in the game" of collecting emerging artists with whom they can grow.

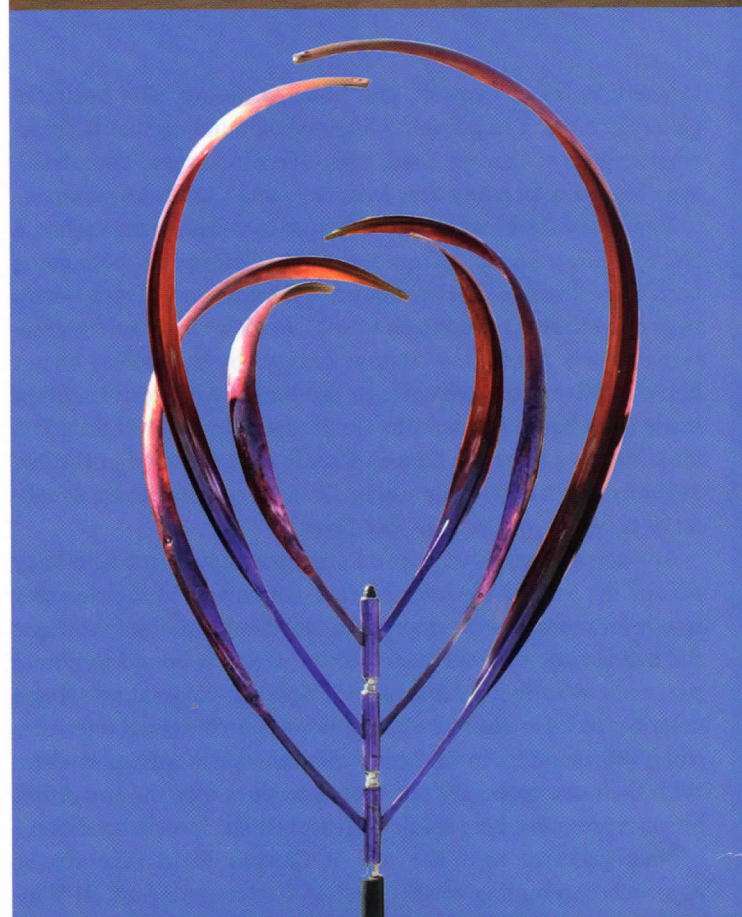
At 520 Canyon Road, the Marc Navarro Gallery is a simple building with a facade that looks like the mason was attempting to capture alligator skin in stone. The high windows, with their cast-iron crossbars, suggest the building might once have been a jail or armory. Inside, Navarro carries a small collection of exquisite vintage Mexican silver, as well as Mexican and Spanish colonial devotional art. The beautiful, sensuous lines of Hector Aguilar's simple copper mirrors, pots, and candlesticks seem to encapsulate the humble but naturally graceful colonial aesthetic.

Tucked into a niche next door to the Compound restaurant, the Bellas Artes Gallery, at 653 Canyon Road, carries the work of about a dozen innovative international artists, especially in ceramic and fiber arts, dominated by the stunning textiles of Olga de Amaral. Owners Bob and Charlotte Kornstein note that tourists often miss their inconspicuous gallery, and tend to divide squarely into groups of love-it or don't-get-it.

Darnell Fine Art, at 640 Canyon Road, is "where the ancient past meets the modern to create classic contemporary art." Shows this year will feature artists Susan Morosky, Monroe Hodder, Claire McArdle, Brenda Hope Zappitell, owner Rachel



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Left to right: A visual feast at Darnell Fine Art; Turner Carroll Gallery presents work by Hung Liu; Waxlander Gallery owner Phyllis Kapp and director Bonnie French

Darnell, Rebecca Crowell, and Shawna Moore. The beautiful gallery is housed in a lovely whitewashed building that is somewhat atypical of Canyon Road, with blue window and door detailing often seen on many New Mexican—and Caribbean—homes.

Two established jewelry stores feature complementary metals at No. 656: Silver Sun and Tresa Vorenberg Goldsmiths, both going back three decades. The precious-metal creations at Tresa Vorenberg range from conventional to wild, made by local and international artists (including custom designs by the gallery owner herself). Silver and turquoise in the Native American tradition made by in-house silversmiths are the specialty at Silver Sun. The building used to be the famous Claude's Bar, opened in the late 1950s by rough and rowdy author Claude François James, daughter of the editor of *The New York Times*.

At Nuart Gallery, 670 Canyon Road, owners Juan and Kim Kelly occupy the former Gormley Market, which was in the Gormley family for more than a century. The storefront windows showcase the humanistic-themed work within, which is bound to attract passersby who feel a kinship with Spanish colonial art. Nuart describes its art as abstract with figurative or architectural reference, along with paintings in the Latin American style of magical realism. With their contemporary but approachable works, the two dozen artists represented here speak poignantly to the human condition.

Four galleries near the top of Canyon Road take strong approaches to finding what is fresh in contemporary art. At Winterowd Fine Art, director Karla Winterowd makes a point of choosing paintings and sculpture unlike what is offered elsewhere on the road. One of the few gallery owners with degrees in fine art and art history, Winterowd sticks with artists who have been at their craft for twenty years or more. Nature is at the heart of her selections: "not only representational landscape, but things that are inspired by nature, like abstract painting and sculpture." She says the goal is to find art that will remain fresh long after it's left the gallery. GF Contemporary, at No. 707, hosts one of the city's best presented art collections, in a modern, residential-style structure. Flooded with natural light and oversize spaces, the gallery serves as

the contemporary counterpart to owner Deborah Fritz's Giacobbe-Fritz Fine Art, at No. 702. At No. 725, the Turner Carroll Gallery presents the work of some 30 artists, dominated in the front room by current star Hung Liu. This Chinese émigré uses archival photos of 19th-century concubines and overlays them with acrylic resin, paint, and collage, as a tribute to the forgotten contributions of women in Maoist China. A Western counterpart is seen in Deborah Oropallo's rodeo imagery of women printed directly on aluminum. Gallery director Megan Fitzpatrick notes that both artists represent the overlooked but fresh voice of San Francisco Bay Area art.

Houshang's Gallery, at No. 713, shows some 33 artists in contemporary representational style in an appealing adobe setting that has been on Canyon Road for more than three decades. Fantasy, London style, is brought to us accent and all at Suhana Gibson's Chalk Farm Gallery, a beautiful building with a structurally and mathematically interesting greenhouse dome filled with plants and light, sculptures and waterfalls. The setting allows the viewer to be transported to another time and place, and is a perfect spot to rediscover your sense of wonder. And at the very top of the road, Ronnie Layden's photography and painting studio sits at No. 901, a showcase of black-and-white film (not digital) photography and modern landscape painting.

Thirty-five years ago, a young artist could rent a room in the Vigil Stables on Canyon Road for five dollars a week. Clearly, those days are gone—Canyon Road today is a luxury community with well-preserved architecture, beautiful gardens, and extraordinary art (as well as an all-inclusive Web site: canyonroadarts.com). But something about the neighborhood remains timeless—a quality that veteran gallery owner Ernesto Mayans decides, upon long reflection, might be called "the present time." Unlike other art districts that rise and fall with fashion, Canyon Road is always current, probably because the large number of galleries and visitors ensures that no single aesthetic vision prevails. Looking back thirty years, Mayans says, lots of things have changed, sure. "But when I look at the spirit of Canyon Road," he says, his eyes sparkling, "that's it—present tense. There's no aging to it." *