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Native Son Brings Outsider Art to Pueblo Arts Center

Remarkable Exhibit Pushes Boundaries of Art October 5-January 12, 2020

(Pueblo, Colo.) You may have heard of Outsider Art, Folk art, Art Brut — and no matter what you call it, this genre of art is sure to catch your eye. In the exhibit, "Outsider Art: The Collection of Victor Keen," over 120 pieces by 38 artists will be on display at the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center from October 5, 2019 through January 12, 2020. Outsider art, or the work of self-taught artists, has been fascinating viewers for the past hundred years. Raw and untrained, these artists often realize their ideas on found materials using makeshift methods that lead to profound works of art.

Well-known Outsider artists such as Adolf Wölfli, Martín Ramírez, Lee Godie, and George Widener will be on display during this exhibit. Widener is a self-taught artist and calendar savant who employs his extraordinary mathematical & calculating capabilities along with memorized census population statistics to create artworks based around significant dates and historical events. His works often employ complex date juxtapositions and bold numerical patterns that support an overarching theme like the sinking of the Titanic, one of his more prominent motifs. Numbers, dates, days, months, shapes and color come together in perfectly structured, elaborate patterns often composed on found paper or pieced together paper napkins.

Victor Keen's interest in collecting encompasses much more than outsider art. Along with the Colorado premier of the Victor Keen collection of artwork, there will be an exhibition of extensive holdings of mechanical banks, labor ID badges, and radios from the early 20th century.

For the Arts Center, hosting the Victor Keen collection is an outstanding opportunity to share with our visitors an assortment that pushes the boundaries of art and facilitates a native son to share his treasures with Pueblo. Says CEO Jim Richerson, "My first experience of the Keen collection was online and I could not help but feel a connection with the Arts Center's collection of santos from the southwestern United States. Therefore I find it quite appropriate to bring such a collection to Pueblo. The Arts Center's mission is to, "...create artistic learning experiences for everyone" and certainly this exhibit has something for everyone. Pueblo is blessed to have such a philanthropic native son."

Victor shares, "That this artwork should travel 2,000 miles to a town in Colorado not widely known as an art mecca may call for an explanation. Pueblo is my hometown, where I lived in the same house with my parents, two brothers, and a sister from my birth until I left for college in Connecticut years later. When I left Pueblo in 1959 there were no museums or art centers of note there beyond those focusing on local history or local industry. Over the years when I returned from time to time to Pueblo, I became familiar with Pueblo's award-winning Sangre de Cristo Arts Center (the "SDC"), opened in 1972 and now featuring six gallery spaces that exhibit art by local, regional, and national artists as well as an auditorium that hosts local and national touring opera, dance and theater.

A number of friends in Pueblo, most of them unfamiliar with outsider art, strongly suggested to me that the SDC would be an ideal venue for introducing this segment of the art world to Pueblo. On meeting Jim Richerson, the CEO of the Arts Center, and curator, Liz Szabo, it became clear that, while SDC had not previously shown outsider art in its galleries, there was interest in exploring the idea. Their interest grew into mutual enthusiasm and serious excitement when Jim and Liz visited Bethany Mission Gallery in Philadelphia."

(Continued)

About the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center:

The cultural hub of Southern Colorado, the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center gives visitors the tools to think and act creatively through a three building complex including seven galleries offering the best in historic and contemporary art by artists of local, regional and national renown. The Arts Center offers the Buell Children's Museum, recognized as the second-best for art by Child magazine, a 500-seat theater featuring a variety of performing arts programs, both local and national, and two gift shops. Over 100 fine arts, dance, and leisure classes are available quarterly providing unique offerings to everyone from children to adults of all skill levels. Admission to the Arts Center is \$10 for adults, \$8 for children, seniors 65+, and military. For more information, please call 719-295-7200; stop by the Arts Center located at 210 N. Santa Fe Ave., just off of I-25, exit 98B, or visit online at www.sdc-arts.org.

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Admission to the exhibition is \$10 for adults, \$8 for children and seniors 65+. Arts Center Members are free. Visit www.sdc-arts.org for gallery hours and other information.

Special Events (included with price of admission to galleries unless otherwise noted):

Event: Sunday, October 6, 2019 @ 1:30 pm | Book signing with Collector Victor Keen

Event: Sunday, October 6, 2019 @ 2 pm | Coffee with the Collectors: Victor Keen & Frank Maresca, NYC Gallery Owner

Event: Friday, November 1, 2019 @ 5-7 pm | Free First Friday ArtWalk

Event: Friday, December 6, 2019 @ 5-7 pm | Free First Friday ArtWalk

What is outsider art?

Originally used to describe art that was created by individuals coping with mental illness or living outside the boundaries of established culture, the term "outsider art" is now used more generally to encompass a great many artists who can more accurately be identified as "self-taught." Sometimes called "folk" artists, the majority of these artists do not create their art for commercial gain; to the contrary, they exist with limited or no connection to the art world as we define it via galleries, museums, schools, curators, dealers, critics and collectors. Outsider art is made by individuals who are driven to create by their own particular inner compulsions.

Who is Victor Keen?

Born in Pueblo, Victor graduated from Pueblo Central in 1959. His father, Charles Keen, a Pueblo attorney, then judge, attended Pueblo public schools and also graduated from Central. Victor's mother was a social worker in Pueblo for many years. Victor has three siblings: Charles, Jr., twin brother Raymond, and sister Morgan, all graduated from Central.

Following high school, Victor graduated from Trinity College in Hartford, CT with a B.A. in economics. He attended Harvard Law School, serving as a law clerk at the U. S. Tax Court in Washington, DC upon completion. During Victor's legal career he has practiced in tax and business law at law firms in New York City and Philadelphia. His last legal position was Chair of the Tax Practice Group at the firm of Duane Morris LLP, headquartered in Philadelphia. He is currently "Of-Counsel" to Duane Morris but not actively practicing.

Victor is a long-time fan and supporter of the Pueblo County Historical Society's publication, "The Pueblo Lore;" a principal funder of the highly successful Central Class of '59 scholarship awarded to Central High graduating seniors; funder a two-year study of the Pueblo's Roselawn Cemetery that resulted in its being added to the National Register of Historic Places; and recently elected to the Central High Hall of Honor. Victor was also recently elected to the Greater Pueblo Sports Hall of Fame. In senior year at Central, Victor captained the Conference Champion track team and co-captained the Conference Champion basketball team. He also set Conference records in two track events and was named to the State all-star basketball team.

In the entrepreneurial vein, Victor is co-chair and majority shareholder of The Coretec Group, Inc., developer of proprietary silicon-based compounds involved in battery extension projects for cell phones, computers, electric cars, etc.; he is co-founder and co-owner Bantam Pharmaceutical LLC, an early-stage oncology company, owner of Philadelphia, PA and La Jolla, CA commercial real estate properties and co owner with a partner of other commercial real estate in New Jersey, Utah, and California.

Victor is currently a member of the advisory board of the Kimmel Center, Inc. (one of the largest performance arts center in America); a board member of the Philadelphia Theatre Company; past board member of PlayPenn, Inc.; and current board member of the Philadelphia Film Society. He is also co-founder, board member and president of the Performance Garage, which provides rehearsal and performance space for emerging Philadelphia dance companies and choreographers.

Victor is married to Jeanne Ruddy, a former principal dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company (1975-1985); member of the Dance Faculty at the Juilliard School in New York City (1985-1995); Founder and Artistic Director of the Jeanne Ruddy Dance Company in Philadelphia (1995-2012); co-founder (with Victor) of a major Philadelphia dance venue, the Performance Garage.

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