



INTERVIEW WITH TIM JASTER

Administrator of Arkansas Valley Art Center

"My vision is to be the focal point for all the art forms, in the valley." Tim Jaster

Marv: I'm visiting with Tim Jaster the Administrator of The Arkansas Valley Art Center here in Buena Vista, Colorado. Tim, tell us a little about yourself.

Tim: My Dad had me to the top of Pike's Peak when I was four. He was military so from Colorado we moved to Europe and then to Tucson. I went to high school in

Tucson, we then moved to Dallas. I joined the military and after the military, went on to study archeology and journalism. Much of the archeological work was in the southwest, with the Laguna, Juni, Navaho and Hopi. I was also an illustrator for The Painted Desert National Park, for a few years. "I started looking for property when I wanted to settle. After seven years of searching, I wound up here, in Buena Vista, Colorado."

Marv: There aren't many places like Buena Vista. Well Tim, you have an interesting background of experience that you can bring to your Center, but also a perspective on why there is something different about the West. Do you feel there are places that are inspiring?

Tim: I think the mountains are a factor. Yesterday, today, tomorrow...every moment is or will be different...inspiring. I get out in them. Friends have said, "You're cooped up here. You'll get tired of these mountains in a few years." That's not true. Every time I look up, "I'm like wow! Wow!" It's always something different. Living in a city you can see that same building and it's kind of that angst when you go back and everything has changed. Here there is sameness but it's always different.

Marv: I think after one is here for a period of time you start taking things for granted but then something hits you. Its sunrise and the peaks are pink for five minutes, then gone. That's a wow! That's a life time experience.

Tim: Or a beam of light coming down. Creative people enjoy it because there's always something fresh. It's always a different view. Also, there is something to do here every day of the year. The outdoors draws the artist out to paint in nature. Now, you can't do that in a lot of places. It's right out your door. Five minutes this way and you're in the Piñons and boulders and that graphic or drive ten minutes that way and you're in the tall pines. The brooks, the mossey hills.

Marv: I think there are some unique places here that are truly spiritual. You're looking at creation.

Tim: There is that inspiration...that dynamic.

Marv: Tim, you are the Administrator of the Art Center. Tell us about the Center and its function.

Tim: The Center has existed for twenty seven years. It has gone through a lot of change with several different people. Many years ago the Center received a grant along with a lot of backing from the folks here locally to have a gallery at Colorado Mountain College. The push right now is to focus our purpose. AVAC is the center for the Chaffee County Arts. We are a 501c3. My vision is to be the focal point for all the art forms, in the valley. We need to bring poets, writers, musicians and others into this. Presently, people view the Art Center as painters. "It's not just painting!" It should be a clearing house for ideas, a focal point for education and a center point for publicity related to all forms of art. We can send press ready material to the media that requires no effort by them and it takes care of their Public Service Announcements. So the cost can be minimal by using the services of the Center.

Marv: You mentioned the various art forms. Recently I've written some poems that were sparked by a western artist's prints. I wouldn't have written those stories without first seeing the paintings.

Tim: Now wouldn't that be nice to have an opening for a Show, at the reception, a reading of that poetry, with a video and background. I hear a poem and I think visually of something I want to paint.

Tim: The Center is here to create that synergy. Understand we're a struggling organization. It's non-profit. I think anything we do here has to be a "Win, Win, Win!" I can't go to the community and say, "We're going to have an Art Show so give us \$500 and sponsor us." I have to be able to identify the benefits they will realize with their sponsorship. We, as artists, have to give something to the community before we can ask the community to give to us.

Marv: That's very valid. There is good value.

Tim: I've worked with our Museum painting signs. We needed space for our last show and they needed signs so there can be this mutual benefit.

Marv: So Tim, where are you headed with the Center?

Tim: I think there is an opportunity for art education, i.e. reasonable cost workshops and seminars. We also have a wealth of experience in the valley. There are so many incredible artists here that can share their skills. I think the education needs to reach out to the High School and Middle School. Another example, through Colorado Mountain College, would be doing some archeological work at Turner Farm. Bring that into the process, as well. I think the more people that can be involved, the more interest there will be. However the discussion and the activity happens, people will have a greater focus on art.

Tim: Computer technology and the web are additional means whereby our membership and the community can be informed and brought together. The cost of our website is less than it would cost to print one newsletter. So we need to use this tool more effectively.

Marv: What do you hear from your participating artists regarding their expectations?

Tim: Our Gallery is well off the beaten path so that a lot of folks in the valley aren't aware of our existence or where we're located. They would like to see us have more visibility.

Marv: That's always the challenge with creative people is that the activity needs to be financially viable, to survive long term.

Tim: It has to ultimately be a viable business. There are too many art groups that are run like a Club.

Marv: I think it's true in writing as well. Excellent writers may not be good business people or marketers.

Tim: An essential element of marketing art is being where you can be seen. I have never bought a piece of art work off the internet. To me it is something that is personal. I want to look at the brush stroke, I want to look at another artist's work and say, "That's well done."

Marv: To me, art is like wine, it's all in your personal preference.

Tim: I want to look at it first-hand.

Marv: Sure. I like to talk with the artist and find out the thinking that went into creating it, understanding the process, as well, as the finished painting.

Tim: Wanting to have that relationship is another benefit we give to the community. In Taos, people come to see the artist. We hope to be able to do that eventually.

Marv: Exactly. This is something I often ask myself, as I go on my daily walks around town, "What does this Town have to offer?"

Tim: Public Art is another one of those things that artists need to give back to this community. It can make it a richer place to live, but also to visit. Some simple letters on our water tower west of town is an example. Sure, we want to add a thirty five foot bicycle and additional graphics that will enrich the appearance of Buena Vista, but it has already created a different impression. We're talking materials and time versus paying a mural artist thousands of dollars. It's another win, win! The more public art we have, the more people will come to look at it. Eventually people are coming here to look at the murals. Turn down any street and there is something going on, something to see. It can be another draw for the community.

Tim: We have such a creative and intellectual pool here. Nobody here is from here. We have that resource here. We need to utilize it. I think if there is a vehicle that allows them to contribute, they will contribute more. The Arkansas Valley Art Center can be that catalyst.

Marv: What I'm hearing is that there can be a whole new world here and you have the passion to point the way.

Tim: The challenge is that there are so many factions working independently. We need to work together. Consider this; bring 30-40 singer songwriters to town, every restaurant and bar has singer songwriter, on a given weekend. Every shop in town would have a vested interest in the success of this. Spread the arts throughout the town. Coordinate it with the Turner Farm, with the Museum, where on a given evening everyone is open and doing arts.

Marv: Tim, before we wrap up here, share a little more about the West. Is it a place, is it a mind-set?

Tim: Here's an example, some folks come up here, spend one or two winters and they're gone. There is the romance of it, but then the reality is, it is more rigorous than a lot of people thought. To be here requires a certain ruggedness and independence. I think it's an attitude. Try it a couple of years and you'll know. You learn to embrace this or you leave. To me the benefits outweigh the challenges. Life is a struggle so...wouldn't you want to struggle somewhere neat.

Marv: There should be more joy than the mundane.

Tim: It's an outdoor environment with everything that goes with it. So I think most of the people that come out here already have it in them. The opportunity to experience being alone in nature lets you discover quickly if it's in you or not.

Marv: This, "Be quiet and listen," thing isn't for everyone.

Marv: Well Tim, you're a unique individual. Thanks so much for your commitment, here at the Arkansas Valley Art Center and in the greater community. Best wishes as you and your members add to our value of life in this valley.

Find out more about the Arkansas Valley Art Center at www.avacgallery.com