

Applicant (GMS): Ballroom Cultural Arts Foundation, Marfa, TX

Project: Ballroom Marfa Arts Archipelago at Vizcaino Park

Ballroom Cultural Arts Foundation / Details of Project Narrative

1a . MAJOR PROJECT ACTIVITIES: The Drive-In is a civic project with a goal to orientate both the local community and those visiting Marfa to architecture, visual arts, film, theater, music, performing arts, and recreation through the rejuvenation of a county park. The partnership between Ballroom Marfa and Presidio County initiates a multi-staged development plan to include town hall meetings throughout the design and development phases, presentations by Ballroom Marfa and the architecture firm MOS in public meetings, and interviews of project leaders on *Talk at 10* on KRTS Marfa Public Radio. We will also explore partnerships with local cultural organizations, local civic organizations, members of the hospitality sector, and additional corporate agencies such as Green Mountain Energy (to develop a renewable energy strategy). As a way to activate the site in the public's perception, prior to construction and completion of the project, we will host events on the project site such as outdoor screenings throughout the spring and summer. Ballroom Marfa intends to host a symbolic ground breaking for the Drive-In, to give the community the chance to engage with civic leaders who support the project such as Texas State Senator Carlos I. Uresti and Texas State Representative Pete Gallego. The Drive-In reflects cooperation with renowned architects, art organizations, local government, and the community to embed permanent public space to exchange creative and artistic practices.

The small environmentally responsible and sustainable park will encompass an entrance gate, band shell, stage and screen, recreation area with picnic tables, newly planted trees and landscaping, pedestrian seating, and parking for cars on angled berms. Healthy concession stand food; a recreational area with a sculptural interactive play ground for young children; and bike racks (donated by Lance Armstrong) in the park grounds are part of our effort to improve the quality of life and encourage a healthy and active environment for children and adults alike. The films shown at the Drive-In will draw from the entire history of cinema including contemporary independent films, silent films with live musical accompaniment, Westerns, science fiction, and international features past and present. The Ballroom Marfa Drive-In will be a place that encourages the continued exploration of the connections between art and landscape.

b. OUTCOME(S) AND MEASUREMENTS: By exposing new audiences to the arts, Ballroom Marfa hopes to rekindle the spirit of community that once surrounded the original drive-in, a lost American icon. Recognized as a community and economic development project, the Drive-In will stimulate the economy by creating new jobs and encouraging the expansion and creation of new businesses in the surrounding cities and counties. The revitalized of Vizcaino Park - surrounded by scenic desert on the northeastern edge of Marfa - will serve as permanent home for our theater and as new cultural center for the community. With cutting edge design and exceptional programming, the Drive-In will be a renowned architectural, cultural and civic project that epitomizes Ballroom Marfa's ambitious pursuit of community engagement and artistic expression. Our goal is to both reach out internationally and reach into our local community – inviting everyone to experience our programs by providing direct access to art and engaging each visitor with an insight into thinking creatively. The construction of the Drive-In advances our growing multi-disciplinary programs and embodies our dedication to significant, innovative, and accessible art for the public.

The Drive-In will launch with an event organized by Josh Siegel, film curator at The Museum of Modern Art. Following the inaugural event, annual programming by Ballroom Marfa will feature a series of up to six curated one-night programs, up to four curated weekend-long programs, and up to two curated weeklong programs. Noted film directors, writers, curators, musicians, and artists will be invited to curate film programs. We will also collaborate with an international roster of art institutions whose artist-oriented priorities are consistent with our own.

As this venue is now going to be realized on public not private land, we have been and will continue to meet with local cultural and civic organizations both in Marfa and around the world to encourage usage of the Drive-In by a variety of programmers. We feel this is a crucial component in representing the distinctive voices of both our community and those drawn to Marfa to experience art and culture in our unique landscape.

1) Livability : Ballroom Marfa is committed to programs that are socially relevant and widely accessible to 21st century audiences. Throughout our history, we have delivered creative and stimulating programming on the most democratic terms to an audience that includes artists, area residents, cultural tourists, academics, and those new to art.

The drive-in is a disappearing architectural and cultural phenomenon, with their numbers decreasing from more than 5,000 at their peak in the 1950s to less than 400 today. For many of the older patrons we interviewed the drive-in experience was seminal for both themselves and their families. For them, the drive-in's extinction is almost like losing a part of America's past. Ballroom Marfa

aims not only to restore this unique venue to the landscape, but also to redefine the drive-in experience for a new audience. As the television and home theater drive more and more people into their living rooms to view movies, the drive-in experience has always been prized as a communal way to enjoy cinema. While living in a small town can allow one to experience a sense of closeness to ones neighbors, it can at the same time be very isolating. In Marfa, one of the challenges we face as a cultural organization is reaching all the different factions of the community – especially those not traditionally interested in contemporary art. We see this project as a bridge to gap the divide that currently exists, as this project will be realized on a park that has traditionally been used by the Hispanic community.

With a cutting-edge design and exceptional programming, it will be an internationally significant architectural, cultural, and civic project that epitomizes Ballroom Marfa’s ambitious pursuit of community engagement and artistic expression. Located in the dramatic landscape of West Texas, Marfa has long been known for its famed “Marfa Lights” but it is equally recognized for its contribution to cinematic heritage and contemporary art. Hollywood’s connection with Marfa began in 1956 with the filming of *Giant* and continues to this day as the spectacular setting for recent Oscar-winning films *No Country for Old Men* and *There Will Be Blood*. In the 1970’s, minimalist artist Donald Judd relocated from New York City to Marfa where he permanently installed his own work in a carefully selected environment. Judd invited many significant contemporary artists to Marfa to also create site-specific works that remain to this day. Presently, Marfa is recognized as one of America’s most important cultural destinations with a vibrant community offering arts and entertainment for all ages. This collective lure is why Marfa is a cultural mecca for travelers from around the globe.

2) Engagement : Ballroom Marfa will present the work of artists, musicians, and filmmakers in conjunction with the Drive-In – providing direct student access to visiting art professionals. All of the public programs, music performances, and film screenings are free and open to the community. Our staff will continue to work directly with local community leaders to democratize our public programs and encourage all members of the community to participate in our events.

Additional programs currently in development:

Filmmaker in Residence – based on the success of our first residency program in 2009, Ballroom Marfa would like to expand and continue this initiative. In hosting Michael Almereyda as a filmmaker-in-residence, Ballroom Marfa put the spotlight on a unique force in American independent film. Over the course of one month with weekly screenings, we invited audiences to immerse themselves in an ongoing discussion with Almereyda as he walked attendees through a film retrospective spanning two

decades. Of the thirteen films screened, selected titles include: *Hamlet*, *Twister*, *William Eggleston In The Real World*, and *Paradise*.

Adaptation – is a summer reading and creative writing program aimed at Junior and Senior High School Students. This program begins with the selection of a literary work that has been adapted into a film. Over the course of three months our Director of Education and Outreach will conduct meetings twice a month with students enrolled in the program. The curriculum will focus on reading and language skills by interpreting the written word through visual arts and film. At the end of the summer, enrolled students with excellent attendance are rewarded with a private screening of the featured film at the Ballroom Marfa Drive. Examples of literary works/films include: *Lord of the Flies*, *Empire of the Sun*, and *Beloved*. Reading and creative writing programs with multidisciplinary approach

The Earth is Yours - exemplifies our commitment to educating Marfa's future generation about the importance of environmental issues. The Ballroom Marfa Drive-In not only increases our potential to expand our arts based curriculum, it is also an environmentally and socially responsible seven-acre park. We will utilize eco-friendly light sources throughout the park, incorporate solar energy and create low impact public restrooms and concession facilities. This real world laboratory will provide the ideal setting for local science teachers and students to learn about the Earth's history, cycles, and sustainability. We will also use recycled materials in Drive-In ground coverings and other operations, create rainwater harvesting systems and plant trees and native vegetation in the playground areas. On site classes and field trips to the site will promote awareness, appreciation, and concern for the natural diversity of the Chihuahuan Desert region through environmental education. Film screenings such as *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* and *Fern Gully: The Last Rainforest* will accompany lessons on the environment.

c . SCHEDULE: Originally sited on private land, the Drive-In has been designed and developed over several years with the architects Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample and their firm MOS. Already complete are the design of the bandshell/screen, the purchase of steel, and the full scale prototype of the structure. Re-envisioned by the Ballroom team as a public project on county land, we have been come into partnership with Presidio County through a unanimous vote in the February 2011 Presidio County Meeting. The new site Vizcaino Park will require a redesign of the previous design, a new masterplan, and design development of park facilities. April/May/June 2011: Town Hall Meeting, (April 21), community meetings, meetings between Ballroom Marfa and Presidio County establishing the agreement for partnership, establish Drive-In Committee, begin Capital Campaign. July/Aug 2011: survey and geotech report, schematic design, community presentation, develop new graphic identity for public relations. Sept/Oct 2011: pricing, design development, approve final park master plan; insurance/risk

management assessment; engage engineers, contractors, and subcontractors; and reach out to artists for park improvement proposals. Nov/Dec 2011/ Jan 2012: bidding, construction documents, ground breaking ceremony. Our goal is to begin construction in Spring 2012. Construction is estimated to take 20-24 weeks, meaning an inaugural opening in Summer 2012.

d. PARTNERS , KEY ORGANIZATIONS, INDIVIDUALS, AND WORK: The Drive-In initiates a collaboration with the architects MOS. MOS engages interdisciplinary discourses, ranging from art to technology, producing a spectrum of design work. The Drive-In design has already received the 2009 Progressive Architecture Award and was featured at the Venice Biennial in 2010. The innovative design anchors the Drive-In as an internationally renowned architectural work for West Texas. In addition to MOS, the Drive-In initiates a collaboration with film curator Josh Siegel, artist and Ballroom Marfa Board member Leo Villareal – Villareal has been commissioned to design the Drive-In entrance sign – and intern architect Melissa McDonnell as the Drive-In Project Manager.

Government supporters include: Presidio County; Texas Governor Rick Perry; Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson; Texas Senator John Cornyn; Texas State Senator Carlos I. Uresti; Texas State Representative Pete Gallego; and Marfa Mayor Dan Dunlap.

Key organizations include: Marfa Chamber of Commerce; Texas Historical Commission- Texas Mountain Trail; Texas Commission on the Arts; and Texas Film Commission.

Local program and community partner s include: Marfa Independent School District; Blackwell School Alliance; Marfa Public Radio; Chinati Foundation; Judd Foundation; Marfa Studio of Arts; and CineMarfa Film Festival.

Program partners outside Marfa include: The Film Foundation (Los Angeles); the Whitney Museum (New York City); AFI Dallas (Dallas);Austin Film Society (Austin); Museum of Fine Arts (Houston); Whitechapel Art Gallery (London); and Centre Pompidou (Paris).

Local hospitality sponsor s include: Hotel Paisano; Thunderbird Hotel; The Get Go; Marfa Book Company; Food Shark; Jett's Bar and Grill; Maiya's Restaurant; Frama @ Tumbleweed Laundry; Padre's Marfa; and Pizza Foundation.

e . TARGET POPULATION: Residing along the Texas-Mexico border in Presidio County, Ballroom currently hosts approximately 14,000 visitors annually who are comprised of a local audience and those that travel across Texas, the United States, and from around the globe. Not only does Marfa have a reputation as a great place to make films, the recent success of the Marfa Film Festival (drawing almost

1,000 visitors annually) and the new CineMarfa Festival show that Marfa has a proven track record as a place that people will travel to see film. The town is also recently hosted its first major music festival the Rail Road Revival Tour bringing over 2,000 visitors to town and doubling the population over the course of a single weekend.

f . PLANS FOR PROMOTING, PUBLICIZING AND DISSEMINATING: Ballroom Marfa draws on the region's strength as a nexus for art and commerce in the dramatic landscape of West Texas. We successfully market directly to both local cultural enthusiasts and world travelers via website campaigns, social network sites, printed invitations, as well as art, culture, and travel publications. Our website is visited annually by 65,000 visitors with over 1.3 million hits. With the assistance of the Drive-In committee we expect a significant increase of all visitors, as a formalized public relations campaign will be undertaken to launch the Drive-In. Ballroom Marfa has already been approached by publications (*Vanity Fair and The New York Times and the Art Forum*) requesting to write stories about the project and launch. The Drive-In will further solidify Texas's reputation as a premiere cultural destination on the worldwide stage.

g . PLANS FOR DOCUMENTING, EVALUATING, AND DISSEMINATING: We expect to see an increase in economic development across the region that will positively impact the entire county not just Marfa, through careful, sustainable tourism that will fund the necessary infrastructure improvements needed across the region. But beyond the tangible metrics for measuring the economic impact this project will have on Presidio county more than anything we hope this park will improve the quality of life for our community and neighbors across the region. To initiate a conversation about the possibility of building a Drive-In theater at Vizcaino Park we have started a survey campaign available in both English and Spanish to record the goals and priorities Marfa residents. This survey has been distributed throughout the town including at area schools. We are using the survey as one of the introductions to the project, so residents understand both the potential this project brings to improving the park facilities, maintenance and programming, in addition to adding a new community theater venue. Results so far show top priorities include: 1) Drive-in theater/amphitheater, 2) Picnic Areas, 3) Recreational/sports programming, 4) Practice fields, Sports courts, and Tree planting 5) Gardens. Most residents responded they used Vizcaino Park occasionally but 95% said major improvements would increase their use of the park. We have used Marfa Public radio as a way to discuss the project, allowing both the radio host and callers to ask questions about the project. On April 21, 2011 we hosted our first Townhall Meeting.

Speakers included Ballroom Marfa's executive director, the director of development, the Drive-In project manager and the Presidio County Judge. We are recording meetings on video and are using feedback to inform the scope of the design, program ideas, and planning strategies for regular community meetings. Though Marfa is a small town, its residents have diverse cultural, economic and educational backgrounds. It is integral to this project that we understand and work with needs and priorities that reflect a diverse cross section of the community.

h. PLANS FOR MAKING THE PROJECT ACCESSIBLE: According to Texas Accessibility Standards projects over a 50K value require ADA compliance. ADA standards are part of our design approach. In addition we are considering ways to make the audio and visual features at the Drive-In accessible to people who are seeing and hearing impaired.

i . BUDGET: Ballroom Marfa's Board of Trustees and the Commissioner's Court of Presidio County join me in respectfully requesting support in the amount of \$250,000 for the Ballroom Marfa Arts Archipelago (Drive-In). Marfa is located in rural Presidio County along the Texas-Mexico border and is without the support of local corporations or community foundations. As a result, Ballroom Marfa will seek funds to raise the project's \$1 million dollar budget from state and federally funded programs, as well as corporations and foundations across the nation. To date we have raised \$487,050 from institutions and individuals including the following lead foundations and corporate sponsors: Brown Foundation Inc. of Houston, Donna Karen Inc., Free City, Anschutz Foundation, Louisa Sarofim Foundation, and Credit Suisse. To increase leadership and funding opportunities, we have engaged the help of a dynamic international committee – the Drive-In Committee includes: Lance Armstrong, Austin, TX; Suzanne Booth, Los Angeles, CA/Austin, TX; Tim Crowley, Marfa, TX; Jeff Fort, Houston/Marfa, TX; Amy Harmon, Denver, CO; Stuart Parr, New York, NY; Katrina Pavlos, New York, NY; Amy Phelan, New York, NY; Charles de Meaux, Paris, France, and Anna Waterhouse, London, England. Funds from this grant will greatly increase the momentum of this initiative and ensure our ability to move forward by mitigating the costs of development, construction planning, and allow us to add a new staff member, who will be specifically focused on managing the Drive-In project.