

# Pasatiempo

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## Xaverio creates art by painting with minerals

He calls his work 'petrales'

By RUTH LOPEZ

Spanish artist Xaverio has been looking at the ground for a long time.

By the time he was 8, he was collecting rocks and found objects. The pull of the earth must have been pretty strong. Xaverio, born Javier Muñoz Bullejos in Granada in 1956, dropped out of law school and started creating art — three dimensional work using minerals, dirt and organic matter.

"The earth is, I think, very old in a very new continent. The minerals tell you about the past and you can travel a bit in time studying the earth, thinking about the people who walked it," Xaverio said.

And he has spent more than 20 years refining his technique, a process that, over the years, has included the use of polymers to adhere the organic elements to, for the most part, wood surfaces. He calls his work *petrales* — a word he coined that he feels best describes his mineral-rich creations. And that is, indeed, what they are; Xaverio paints with minerals.

He has been exploring the origins of painting — those first lines in the dirt of ages ago.

"I was always concerned with the origins of things," he said.

While Xaverio's work has been widely collected abroad, he will have his United States premiere here, at the recently opened Meredith-Kelly Latin American Fine Art, 135 Palace Ave. There will be an artist's reception from 5 to 7 p.m. Saturday, July 27.

For the next three months, the artist will be working in Santa Fe and he, as you can well imagine, has found the natural offerings of this region completely fascinating, especially the wide range of reds in the earth.

He has found a kindred spirit in the sand painting of the Navajo, as well.

"There is a connection between their technique and mine," he said, adding that he hopes to spend some time, and hopefully collaborate, with American Indian artists. Before he leaves the United States he wants to create a body of work "that reflects the magnetism that this land emits."

On a recent visit to his studio,



Xaverio working on his mineral creations

### DETAILS

**WHO/WHAT:**  
Xaverio

**WHEN:**  
Artist's reception  
5-7 p.m. Saturday, July 27

**WHERE:**  
Meredith-Kelly  
Latin American Fine Art,  
135 W. Palace Ave.

a small collection of green and volcanic rock that Xaverio had amassed from a nearby hill off Old Santa Fe Trail, sat on a work table, waiting to be ground.

Xaverio carried many of his tools and materials from his studio in Granada, including a rather heavy, and very beautiful bronze mortar and pestle.

Sitting on a shelf nearby was a Spanish-language guidebook to minerals, another indispensable item that Xaverio will not travel without.

"I didn't want to waste any time putting together the studio," he said, adding that it was more important just to get to work.

So even the lowly plastic buckets holding the ground

earth and rock came from Spain.

Xaverio's process always begins with a morning meditation. Then, several times a week he goes to gather his minerals, metals, sand, stone and in some cases, shells.

"I have to have direct contact with the earth," he said.

Once in his studio he begins to break down the rock, placing it in *el mortero* for grinding.

He then sifts the matter and mixes it in with a polymer, creating the sludge that he paints with.

One finished piece sitting nearby, a large work in the shape of the province of Granada, with minerals defining the regions, looked like a science poster come alive. Much of the metallic matter in his work creates a shine that comes through the granules, adding to the dimension already in his work.

With titles such as *Fossil of Wave*, *Dragon's Mind* and *The Blue Collection*, it is easy to see how Xaverio maintains solid