

“WE NEED BEAUTY. IT HELPS US MAKE SENSE OF OUR WORLD,” says the multidisciplinary artist Marietta Patricia Leis ‘72, ‘75 (Antioch Los Angeles, BA in Psychology, MA in Clinical Psychology). She has braided her work as a therapist, teacher, and artist into a practice that invites viewers to explore the external and internal landscapes we all have access to—and that uses visual art and poetry to communicate her concern around the preservation of the earth. She brings these themes together in a solo exhibition that opened in early September at the Taos Art Museum at Fechin House.

For Leis, many roots of her art career trace back to Antioch. Leis studied as an undergraduate at Antioch Los Angeles during its founding in the early ‘70s. At that time, Antioch partnered with the Primal Institute—a clinic founded by Dr. Arthur Janov, inventor of Primal Therapy which focuses on the repressed pain of childhood trauma—to have clinicians offer classes for college credit. She went on to get her MA in Clinical Psychology, also at Antioch Los Angeles.

Leis worked for a decade at the Primal Institute before deciding to pursue her passion in visual arts. When she applied to the prestigious Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art program at the University of New Mexico, she credits her study at Antioch for helping her explain her artistic identity. “I felt very well prepared. The progression of legitimacy and accreditation was just so important to my life,” she says. “Antioch offered programming where you could be a free thinker and spread your wings.”

Since then, she has remained in New Mexico—and has gone on to have a long, successful career as an artist. Today, she makes a point of mentoring younger artists. Her studio assistants are often just finishing their degrees or starting their careers. She shows them how to operate day-to-day as professional artists.

Her ultimate work, though, is as an artist trying to make beautiful, meaningful things. “I try for aesthetic beauty,” explains Leis. “Because once people move into that beauty, then they can start thinking of what’s happening with our world. They don’t have to be pulled down by it, but they can be inspired.”

— Georgina Marie Guardado

