In Taos, Monsters Become Art

Taos youth make art out of fear then light up the town with their creations

Taos N.M. September 8, 2017 – A Monster Design Challenge is underway in schools across Taos County, New Mexico. Sponsored by The Paseo Project and implemented by STEMarts Lab, the competition is calling for artistic visualizations of environmental and personal “monsters” by youth aged 12 to 20. It will culminate in a community projection performance during the Paseo Party on the Plaza on September 23, from 7:00 to 11:00pm.

The concept for the challenge grew out of the work of Motomichi Nakamura, the lead artist for the Paseo Project's 2017 new media art event. The call for entries has gone out to Taos County middle and high school students and is based on Motomichi’s Tiny People and Giant Monster series in which he incorporates the monster theme as a mythological character to explore environmental issues. Winners of the challenge will have their monsters projected on buildings around the plaza, alongside the artist’s work, and all entries will be showcased on the Paseo Project website.

To date, the Paseo Monster Design Challenge has registered over 500 students in Taos County. Nineteen middle and high schools and educational institutions are involved, including all public and charter schools. Each school has chosen a unique medium and style for its monster designs – which will manifest as acequia monsters, climate change and e-waste creatures, and even monsters of addiction. Jody McNicholas, art teacher at Rocky Mountain Youth Learning Lab, says her students will work with duct tape on canvas to create symbolic monsters of addiction. “The archetype of the addict combined with the archetype of the monster has some far-reaching possibilities!”

Motomichi says, “My idea for PASEO is that the various monsters will come visit Taos from various places just for the night and play around. Also, I always like the idea that the digital projection doesn’t leave any physical trace after the installation, which kind of reminds me of ghosts, spirits or mythical creatures.” The artist works in various media including, painting, sculpture, animation, as well as projection mapping. His work has been exhibited globally in museums and galleries.

Agnes Chavez, director of STEMarts@ThePaseo, Paseo Project’s educational program, describes the Monster Design Challenge. “The challenge is an online platform that allows all Taos County school teachers the opportunity to explore Motomichi’s work and theme and guide their students in a unique monster design.
We believe that the challenge and potential of STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math – education in the future is for all students to have access to the latest technologies and 21st century thinking. The Paseo is the perfect platform for teachers and students to use these tools to play, explore and imagine a better world. It has been amazing to see the creative responses coming out of each school"

**At Paseo Party on the Plaza,** about 50 student monsters, along with monster animations created by UNM-Taos Digital Media Arts students, will be projected on the Historic County Courthouse and other buildings on Taos Plaza. The focal point of the massive one-night free art party will be the oldest hotel in Taos: Hotel La Fonda de Taos, built in 1820. Motomichi, in collaboration with DJ Kanizzle, will choreograph a pulsating 4-hour score to accompany his signature red, black and white patterns and giant monster characters projected on the facade of the hotel. Fire artist Jamie Vaida, creator of Mutant Vehicles for Burning Man, will install Fire Tree and Flaming Pipe Organ in collaboration with Alvin Sessions. The Illuminator, an art collective that emerged from the Occupy Wall Street movement, will unite community members in a group statement envisioning the future of Taos. DJ Oliver will curate Silent Disco, which merges three DJ booths into 500 multi-channel headsets for party-going dancers. A virtual photo booth powered by Luster using Instagram and Twitter feeds will bring everyone with a smartphone into a community documentary of the party.

**About the Paseo Project**
The Paseo Project is a 501c-3 nonprofit whose mission is to transform art through community and community through art. The Paseo Party on the Plaza is the Paseo Project’s fourth annual fall outdoor art event. It is again part of Taos Fall Arts Festival’s opening weekend events.

**The Paseo Party on the Plaza at a Glance**
Saturday, September 23, 2017, 7:00 to 11:00pm
Historic Taos Plaza, a free event
PaseoProject.org, @paseotaos, #paseotaos, facebook.com/paseotaos. paseo@paseoproject.org,
Motomichi Nakamura, VJ mapping artist: www.motomichi.com
Fire artist Jamie Vaida: www.jamievaida.com
The Illuminator: www.theilluminator.org
Luster, virtual photo booth: www.luster.cc

**Press photos:** [www.dropbox.com/sh/gaqpkbbcc4k3hrt7/AADuaxKclxyAXxuHhmwizXqba?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/gaqpkbbcc4k3hrt7/AADuaxKclxyAXxuHhmwizXqba?dl=0)

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The Paseo Project | PO Box 1075 Taos NM 87571 | paseo@paseoproject.org