

bark of a tree holds an abstract beauty without us ever seeing the whole tree. Likewise, the splashes of paint on a canvas may inspire thoughts of energy, excitement, and freedom. In *The Shape of a Pocket*, art critic John Berger wrote about painters like Rembrandt, Van Gogh, and Francis Bacon, as well as lesser-known or anonymous artists, emphasizing how their works capture the struggles and dignity of everyday people. Throughout, Berger's writing reinforces a belief in art's power to connect people across time and space.

A reflection of the maker

Contemporary art has long been considered a reflection of the artist instead of a reflection of who paid for it to be

made, as was the case in Renaissance patronage. The decline of aristocratic patronage after revolutions (French and American) led artists to find new ways to sell their work. Salon exhibitions and art dealers emerged, helping independent artists gain recognition. The Impressionists (late 19th century) painted modern life—cafés, streets, and leisure—breaking from historical and religious subjects.

With Modernism and Abstract Expressionism, artists became completely independent, exploring personal and social themes. Galleries, collectors, and museums replaced churches and monarchs as the primary buyers of art.

Contemporary art often grapples

with complex social, political, and cultural issues, reflecting the diverse and rapidly evolving world we live in. In contemporary art, ideas often matter more than technical skill and focus on meaning rather than imitating reality. Art questions and critiques reality, and even distorts it. Our world is reflected in many kinds of art, expressing contrasts of beauty, chaos, environmental issues, and even digital culture.

Artistic autonomy: a chosen beauty

Art market interests have begun a return to art as beauty and refreshment. Perhaps now, in contemporary art, instead of portraying what has been paid for by a controlling hierarchy, be it religion, governments, advertising

and money, art as a true human expression is making its return. Art materials are easily obtained, and anyone with a pencil or brush can make something and exhibit it.

Many artists are embracing vivid colors, organic forms, and detailed craftsmanship again, balancing abstraction with recognizable beauty in dreamlike landscapes and soft, emotional portraits, or using light and space to create immersive experiences. Beauty is making a comeback, in bold, fluid and perhaps even unsettling ways.

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Snapshots of Our Community

Bunco Night Fundraiser, Feb. 22

Right: Area residents rolled the dice Feb. 22 to raise more than \$4,500 for a future meditation garden at Trinity Community Park in Monument. More than 60 people took part in Bunco night hosted by the park and Tri-Lakes Dynamic Rotary Club at Trinity Lutheran Church. The proceeds will go toward the garden that will include benches, sculptures, wind spinners, birdhouses, a labyrinth, and Rotary Peace Poles that display the message "May Peace Prevail on Earth." In photo, Debby Jeroslow came dressed for the occasion. *Photo by Laurie Beasley.*



Monument Lake restrooms coming

Right: The thousands of people who visit Monument Lake each year soon won't have to use a porta potty when nature calls. Ground was broken in February on what will be permanent restroom facilities. The inset photo example of what the building might look like was



provided by Parks and Trails Planner and Program Manager Cassie Olgren. It has two unisex bathrooms with plumbing. She says she hopes the facility will be ready for use by the end of June. About 75% of the cost will be picked up by a \$117,000 grant from Colorado Parks and Wildlife. *Photo by Tia M. Mayer.*

Lake and Lantern opened, Feb. 26



Above: Lake and Lantern Café opened on Feb. 26 in Palmer Lake at the former Speedtrap restaurant. It serves breakfast and lunch daily and aims to create an alcohol-free space for connection. Their offerings include zero-proof beer and mocktails. CEO Raquel Garcia leads the café with her son Jordan as chef, her husband Chris handling operations, and her son Jayden as cook, server, and mocktologist. Other family members contribute as needed. Lake and Lantern, with the motto "life, lit differently," will host in-person recovery meetings by HardBeauty starting April 2 at 7:30 pm, offering hot coffee but no food. CEO Raquel Garcia, founder of HardBeauty and the HardBeauty Foundation, supports these efforts through the café. For more details, visit www.lakeandlantern.com or call 719-300-8013. To learn more about HardBeauty and the HardBeauty Foundation, check out www.hardbeauty.life and www.hardbeautyfoundation.org. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

Taste of Life expands shop, Mar. 1



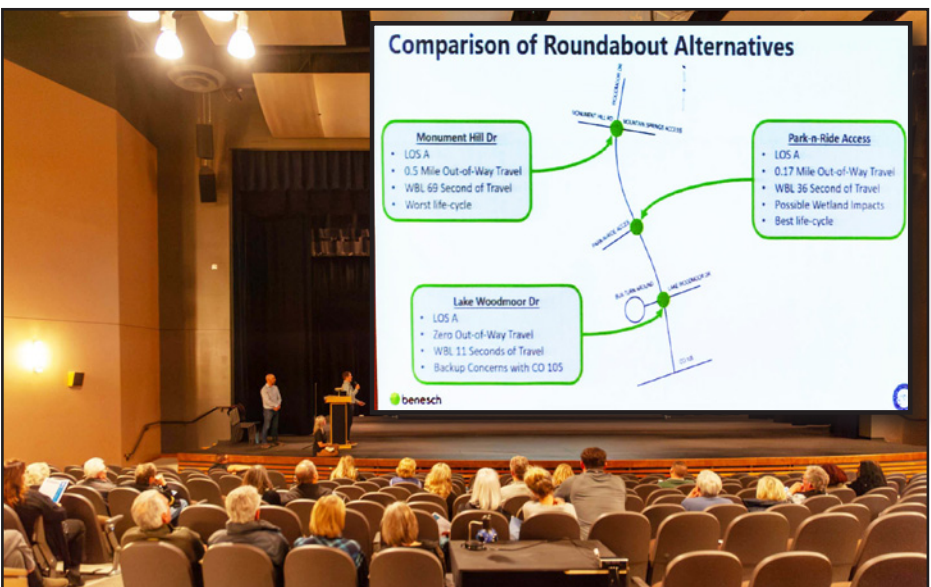
Above: On March 1, the Taste of Life store, 18965 Base Camp Road, held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of its expanded retail shop. The shop has moved to the front of the building and features homemade meals for those too busy to cook, gluten-free options, and keto options. The store was packed for the event, which was covered by Fox 21 news. For more information, see www.tasteoflifefestores.com. Inset: Donna Poelstra, owner of Taste of Life, greeted the crowd at the grand reopening. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

Rock House ready for Easter

Right: On an early spring day, March 23, families and friends enjoyed lunch and/or ice cream at the Rock House ice cream shop, 24 Highway 105, Palmer Lake. Shown from left are Jeff Goldman, owner of the Rock House, Lynda Pate, Claire McFadden, Logan Downey, and Kristen McFadden (Claire's mother). The Rock House also features house-made fudge, chocolate, and popcorn as well as lunch and dinner items. The Easter bunny atop the dinosaur appeared to be enjoying the ride. *Photo by Steve Pate.*



Roundabout alternatives, Mar. 5



Above: El Paso County hosted a community presentation on March 5 to discuss its Intersection Study for Woodmoor Drive and Lake Woodmoor. County Project Manager Alissa Werre introduced project managers John Moscovich and Michael Romero from Benesch. While presenters received positive feedback on a temporary roundabout, concerns about its proximity to Highway 105 led to the evaluation of three potential full-size roundabout locations (shown in inset): Woodmoor Drive and Lake Woodmoor, Woodmoor Drive and the Park & Ride entrance, and Woodmoor Drive and Monument Hill Road. Once a decision is finalized, the design phase is expected to take 12-18 months, with construction slated for late 2026 or early 2027. Based on traffic studies and the achievable level of service (LOS), the county favored the roundabout option at Woodmoor Drive and the Park & Ride. Attendees raised questions and concerns, which were documented, and additional input was welcomed until March 21. From left on stage are Romero, Werre, and Moscovich. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

PLAG portrait workshop



Above: Members of the Palmer Lake Art Group (PLAG) enjoyed a club portrait workshop session in March. PLAG members, from left, Wilhelmina Steenbergen (modeling), Anne Dye, and Mark Dixon join the Plein Air Artist of Colorado winter indoor drawing program at Library 21c in the Create Space. PLAG members are invited to join this twice-a-month event where artists paint or draw in short gesture or long pose sessions. For information, visit PalmerLakeArt-Group.org. *Photo courtesy of Palmer Lake Art Group.*