

Della Vigil's straw appliqué wins 2014 Spanish Market honors

Della Vigil won the "Innovation Within Tradition" award at Santa Fe's 63rd Annual Traditional Spanish Market in July, an internationally renowned art competition sponsored by the Spanish Colonial Arts Society of Santa Fe.

Her "Florecimiento de Amor" (Love Blossoming), a straw appliqué piece, was praised by judges for its "innovative introduction of modern characteristics to a traditional craft while demonstrating a clear connection to New Mexican artistic traditions."



"Winning an award like this can really help elevate me as an artist," Vigil says. "It was overwhelming, but it was good because people were interested in an art form that dates back hundreds of years."

She is an administrative specialist in SFI's Office of the Vice President for Science.

Straw appliqué is a method of inlaying a golden straw design onto wood and coating it with varnish, yielding a shimmering design with the look of gold but without the price tag. Many colonial-era villagers in Northern New Mexico used this method to decorate precious items with a golden finish. The

technique became widely regarded as "poor man's gold."

Vigil was first selected to participate in the Traditional Spanish Market in 2008 and has won past awards for her straw appliqué designs. Her work has been exhibited in The Museum of Spanish Colonial Art, sold at the Santuario de Chimayo gift shops, and commissioned by collectors. She teaches workshops on the art, and some of her students have won awards too.

For Vigil it is simply a labor of love.

"It's a great way for me to unwind after a long day," she says. "I'm fascinated by old things, and it is important to me to keep the traditions of my ancestors alive and pass them on to the next generation."

For more information on the award and straw appliqué, visit the Spanish Colonial Arts Society website. ■