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Bella Zarate · Oct 3 · 2 min read

The Fourth Estate: An Artistic Tribute to Newspapers and Democracy

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The Beach Museum of Art launched its latest exhibition, Rural America. This exhibit features a variety of displays by different artists, including Jeremiah Ariaz and his work "The Fourth Estate," which shines a light on the importance of local newspapers in American society.

After visiting every corner of Kansas, Ariaz worked to showcase the crucial link between journalism and community. "The images are a celebration of the civic function, the labor, and the technology of local newspapers' production, while documenting an industry under threat. As are the ideals of democracy, the press upholds," Ariaz said.

Jeremiah Ariaz at The Beach Museum of Art
Sound Bite 1





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Ariaz hopes that his work gets people thinking about what's on the line as more newspapers close down, which could wipe out a crucial part of our history. "They hold a community's collective history," Ariaz said. "Quite literally, they hold in their bound archives, in photographic negatives and prints, the history of our towns and cities."

Jeremiah Ariaz at The Beach Museum of Art
Sound Bite 2



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All over the country, local newspapers are vanishing. This is leaving a lot of communities without a reliable place to get trustworthy information. The drop in local journalism doesn't just change the way the stories are told, but it puts a big piece of democracy at risk. "With the loss of local news, citizens are less likely to vote, less politically informed, and less likely to run for public office. In other words, democracy loses its foundation," Ariaz said.

Jeremiah Ariaz at The Beach Museum of Art
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Ariaz believes that when newspapers disappear, something deeper than pages will be lost, the connection written in print brings communities together. His work represents the hardships, stories, and values that unite us. "We need visual storytellers, we need artists, we need other ways to interpret this information, we need ways that are going to make us feel, that are going to move us, and statistics don't often do that," Ariaz said.

Jeremiah Ariaz at the Beach Museum of Art
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For Ariaz, The Fourth Estate goes beyond just being a photography display – it's a homage to the individuals and stories that keep people informed. He hopes visitors walk away with a newfound appreciation for the importance of local newspapers and the connections they create.

The work by Ariaz, which is entirely free to visit, allows everyone to dive into the essential role that journalism plays in our society.

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