

# see & hear

NEW GALLERIES MAKE THE SCENE p.118 /// PHOTOGRAPHER ROBERT ROSS: INTO AFRICA p.120



## BASE JUMP

Basalt's beloved arts center enters its next era with a name change, a new director, and a goal of further inspiring the local creative community.

BY ALISON MARGO

**G**ENNA MOE GRASPS A BIG MUG OF HOT TEA in her sun-drenched office at the Art Base in Basalt with the bright, wide-eyed look of a young professional who has just landed her dream job (in this case, as the organization's new executive director). Her staff is busy in the adjacent gallery installing new works by Jill Sabella, a nationally exhibited artist from Snowmass. "I love the visual arts, and I love people," Moe says. "Being able to merge those two things is ideal."

Previously known as the Wylie Art Center, the nonprofit, located in Basalt's former library downtown, not only has new leadership and a new name, but also harbors ambitious plans for the future, leading up to its 25th anniversary in 2021. Moe, 29, is leading the charge with energy >>

New executive director Genna Moe has ambitious plans for the midvalley's premier arts facility.



The Art Base would like to build an addition to its current building in Basalt.

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and exuberance, after seven years at the Aspen Art Museum and the Wheeler Opera House—all while earning a master’s degree in arts development and program management from the University of Denver, volunteering as president of the Aspen Young Professionals Association, and completing Roaring Fork Leadership’s program.

“It’s a really inspiring time to watch the Art Base evolve,” says board vice president Kathy Honea. “There are so many new changes going on, it’s a whirlwind. Genna is the perfect person for the job.”

The Wyly was founded in 1996 by artist Deb Jones in conjunction with Compass, the education foundation that oversees the valley’s Community Schools. It was named after late Texas businessman and philanthropist (and local second homeowner) Charles Wyly, who helped significantly with funding. The organization became an independent nonprofit when it moved from the Aspen Community School campus in Woody Creek to Basalt in 2005, establishing itself as the midvalley’s premier arts center.

“The name change has been in the works for quite some time—it

just hadn’t been executed,” Moe says. “From the time the organization moved to Basalt, the idea was always that we would change our name and be more community focused. With the recent change in administration, it finally felt like the right time.”

She adds that the organization’s focus is on the “three E’s”: education, exhibition, and events. The Art Base now offers educational programs for children and adults, two exhibitions per month, and an ongoing slate of community events. Over the next five years, three new programs will be rolled out, designed to address needs that are not currently being met by other local arts nonprofits.

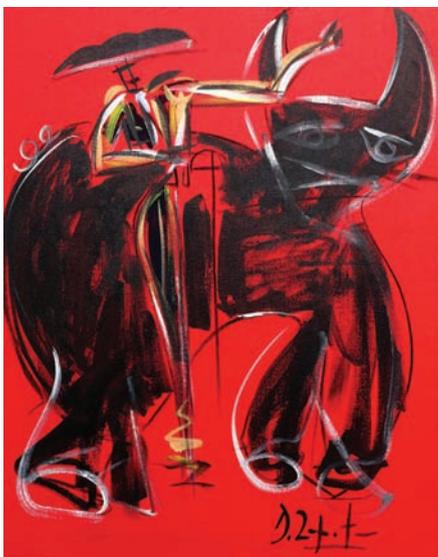
“They will help us to really distinguish ourselves,” says Moe.

The first, Art Share, will be an online gallery through which artists can offer works for rent or sale to local businesses, such as real-estate agents staging homes or restaurants needing art for their dining rooms. The second program, Art Commons, will rent social studio space by the hour or longer to local artists while also providing them with a way to enhance collaboration. And on the community front, Art as Healing will explore ways to implement art in health and recovery settings, such as Aspen Valley

Hospital and Valley View Hospital’s Calaway Young Cancer Center.

The Art Base is negotiating with the town of Basalt to purchase the building it occupies and also to build a proposed addition of up to 4,000 square feet with separate gallery and classroom spaces as well as an indoor/outdoor events venue available for public rental. Currently the organization uses a storefront on Midland Avenue that is being leased by the city as an additional gallery, but Moe says the arrangement is not sustainable in the long term. Ideally, the town would help defray the cost of renovating the permanent space in the hopes of attracting more people and revenue downtown, says Moe of the proposal that’s under consideration.

She adds that the timing couldn’t be better for the Art Base to grow its mission and space. “Basalt is in the process of trying to reinvent itself,” notes Moe. “What’s exciting to me is the Art Base gets to be a part of that by saying: this is who we are, and this is how we can help revitalize downtown through the arts.”



Red Bullfighters, Domingo Zapata

## Open Season

*A pair of new galleries enlivens Aspen’s art landscape.*

**Barns have an iconic place in the Western landscape.** In their stoic solitude, with weather-beaten lumber and peeling paint, they are bastions of Americana, evoking a romanticized pioneer past. In the hands of artist **Jennifer O’Meara**, barns are vessels for extraordinary explorations of color, shape, and abstraction in the large-scale digital prints displayed at her eponymous gallery (613 E. Cooper Ave., jomearastudio.com).

A photojournalist by training, O’Meara combs backroads to find her subjects, taking 90 to

100 shots of a single barn. “Back in the studio, I stitch the shots together, adjust colors, and do a photo collage to get the abstraction I want,” she explains. A final veneer of wax renders her pieces as luminous and timeless as her subject matter.

Meanwhile, the **Cha Cha Gallery** (426 E. Hyman Ave., chachagallery.com) is the brainstorm of Corsican jewelry designer Charlotte Lena and Spanish-American painter Domingo Zapata.

Why Aspen? “I visited in 2013 and fell in love with it,” Lena says.

“Positive Energy” is the title of Zapata’s opening exhibition, a sweeping panorama of colorful canvases painted in a flamboyant Neo-Expressionistic style. Internationally known for his polo images, he paints in series and has included ballerinas (an homage to Degas), matadors, and pandas alongside the ponies for this exhibit. Also on display are large-scale iconic photographs reinterpreted by French artist Jonathan Bermudes and jewelry fabricated by the French atelier of Edouard Nahum and designed by Lena. —**Dexter Cirillo**