

Artists-in-Residence brings business for building owners, exposure to local artists



GLENN LANDBERG/THE ARBITER Local artist Bryan Moore talks about his work while sitting in front of his original paintings at the Artists-in-Residence at the Linen Building in downtown Boise.

Boise is known as a small, but still uniquely urban cityscape. Its few tall buildings jut from the ground, framing the caress of our foothills which lead to the crest of mountains. Nestled within, a tiny metropolis of sorts bustles with activity.

Businesses are born here, students are educated and flung far and wide, families are maintained. But there has always been a complaint about a lack of “culture,” especially that which is generated within our communities. The newly renamed Boise Department of Arts and History has created a flourishing relationship with the owners of the 8th Street Marketplace, fostering a creative community that has become popular among Boise’s citizens. Now opening its third year of business, the Artist-in-Residence (AiR) program is the first of its kind.

After seeing the need for this, and with the downhill curvature of the current economy, city planners and business owners pledged a promise to the residents and culture-consumers of Boise to birth some much needed culture. They have since been using the spaces in BoDo, more specifically, the Mercantile Building in the 8th Street Marketplace to do so. It’s the solution to more than one inhibition for businesses and artists. Rental space for working studios are scarce at best while affordability is out of the question, especially for most fledgling and even some fairly established artists. Local businesses were faced with empty spaces, devoid of any marketable interest. And thus the mission behind AiR was born.

According to the application for AiR, “Although these residencies are for a short duration (three months), they offer artists an opportunity to gain a fresh perspective on their work, experience a new venue in the urban center, and share their craft with a wider audience.”

This creation of culture is then added to the growing and ever-changing list of events for First Thursday and all artists are welcome to plan their own exhibitions and openings while in-residence. No medium is left out: painting, drawing, photography and others are encouraged. The works of film, dance as well as the written and spoken word have graced the spaces of the Mercantile Building.

One such artist, Boise native Bryan Moore, has found himself with this unique opportunity.

“It’s great. I’ll probably cry when I have to leave,” Moore said about his time at the Artists-in-Residence program.

A tall, dark-haired man with bright eyes, Moore has vitality in his physical presence and his artwork. His most recent exhibition outside of AiR wrapped up New Year’s eve at The Linen Building — also in downtown Boise. “Urban Natives” has garnered the attention of younger and older viewing generations in local circles. Moore creates mixed media expanses which vibrate with color and intensity centered on traditionally tribal depictions from South American to Polynesian.

“Honestly, it’s mostly used house paint from the dump and oil pens. They only take me a few days at most,” Moore said of his more popular works from the “Urban Natives” collection.

Looking upon the painted forklift palettes, viewers can feel a sense of street art influencing the work. When asked if this was intentional, Moore was inconclusive. He was once a punk-skater years ago, but has since become detached from the current trend in street and guerrilla art.

Moore is a Boise State graduate with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in illustration and a minor in visual arts. He served in the military in his youth, traveling and experiencing life, but eventually came back to Boise to start his family. He is now married with three children — two daughters and a young son. Moore is a proponent of Boise’s appeal to families. He spends a considerable amount of time in his space on the second floor of the Mercantile building, and can be found there Monday through Friday from morning to early afternoon.

As advice for young artists looking to get their own exposure, Moore urges them not to give up.

“It’s not that you’re not good enough. It’s honestly, usually, just a matter of style with gallery owners.”

As for his own experiences, he admitted it’s hard to stay motivated to work a typical wage-earning job and continue to produce worthwhile work requiring an additional 10 to 20 hours of studio time per week. He also encouraged other artists to look for spaces and programs such as AiR.

“It really pushes the work and the artist to the next level, forces you to work bigger,” Moore said.

Moore will continue his residency through March 15. He plans to be engaged with the First Thursdays in February and March. Participation in First Thursday is mandatory for artists in AiR. Moore also has a group show with three others known as The Vague Collaborative. Their exhibit, “Vague IV” will open Feb. 11 and 12 in his space in the Mercantile Building, Suite 201. Vague Collaborative’s last show was awarded Best of Boise’s Editor’s Pick.

If you are interested in applying for the next installment of AiR, visit the Boise City Department of Arts and History’s blog at <http://boiseartsandhistoryblog.com/> or their website directly at <http://artsandhistory.cityofboise.org/index.aspx>. So, next time you hear a complaint about the lack of community-oriented culture in Boise, speak up and promote the work of AiR.