

## **On Site: The Artisans of Hotel Willa**

— An Inaugural Exhibition at The Gallery at Hotel Willa

The Paseo Project is delighted to announce On Site, the inaugural exhibition at The Gallery at Hotel Willa. This exhibit celebrates the extraordinary talents of local artists and artisans whose work enlivens the newly remodeled Hotel Willa grounds in Taos.

Opening in May 2025, Hotel Willa represents the transformation of the historic Indian Hills Motel into a unique “art hotel” destination, blending Taos’ distinctive hospitality with creative expression. Developed by The Casetta Group, this reimagined hotel in downtown Taos features 51 guest rooms, a restaurant and bar, an outdoor pool, a 2,000-square-foot gallery, and an on-site Artist in Residence Program. Together, Hotel Willa and The Paseo Project are committed to providing year-round opportunities for local artists to engage with the community and visitors.

In tribute to Taos’ vibrant art culture, Hotel Willa collaborated with local artists and artisans to create an inspiring aesthetic throughout its rooms and shared spaces. For On Site, The Paseo Project has curated a selection of works by these talented artists, offering an expanded view of the creativity featured in the hotel’s interiors.

On Site features works by artists including Afton Love, Abby Salsbury, Dawning Pollen Shorty, Sean Ratliff, Johnny Defeo, Boramie Sao, Izumi Yokoyama, Dean Pulver, Debbie Long, Aaron John Dubois, Paulina Ho and more. In addition to these artists, the exhibition will highlight contributions from the many hands involved in the project, from contractors to landscapers, as well as special works by restaurateurs Maida Branch and Johnny Ortiz-Concha; security personnel, Mark Kemper; and contractor, TILT.

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### **Afton Love**

The Other Side (with Eyes)  
Graphite on tracing paper  
27 ½ x 27 ½ inches  
Courtesy of the Artist

The Other Side (as Object)  
Graphite on tracing paper  
27 ½ x 27 ½ inches  
Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Artist in Hotel Lobby

## Biography

Afton Love is a New Mexico based artist working across media, including graphite, beeswax, resin, and latex. Known for her large-scale drawings, Love's works are often commissioned for site specific installation. She is collected widely and has shown internationally, and has been the recipient of numerous residencies and awards including The Helene Wurlitzer Foundation grant, The Santa Fe Art Institute residency, a Vermont Studio Center full fellowship from the Joan Mitchell Foundation, and most recently, completed a year fellowship with Gallery Route One in Point Reyes Station. Love holds a BFA from California College of the Arts in Oakland.

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aftonlove.com

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## Abby Salsbury

### Spineless Series

Glazed earthenware clay

Approx. 14 x 14 x 2 ½ inches

Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Artist in Guestrooms

## Biography

Born in New York City, I grew up in the Berkshire Hills of Western Massachusetts with very early and consistent encouragement in the arts. I attended the Philadelphia College of Art and The University of Colorado, studying in the clay studios headed by William Daley and Betty Woodman; graduating with a BFA in ceramics from PCA. During my eight months in Boulder I explored, discovering Taos, NM, loving its similarities to my northeastern home: an intimate community with support for the arts. During a short stint back in Massachusetts, my husband, sculptor and furniture maker Dean Pulver, and I started a gallery called "The Artistry" with the goal of supporting local artists exhibiting high quality fine crafts which would inform and educate the public about their place in the art world. During this time I maintained my studio, developed my pottery line, attended wholesale shows and taught classes. In 1996 Dean and I left the Berkshires for Snowmass Village, Colorado to work at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center. When our summer work and studies ended we made our way south and, with fond memories of my earlier southwest explorations, settled in Taos, NM. Since then, I have concentrated on my clay business, Butterpie Productions. In the fall of 2003 I decided it was time to refuel those creative juices and I enrolled in the University of New Mexico/Taos's Printmaking classes. Nine years later I received a scholarship in the printmaking studios of the Penland School for Crafts in North Carolina. At present my work is varied and multi-layered, encompassing many techniques, materials and processes. I am still actively producing my Butterpie Production's

Tableware line and making prints, as well as works that are a hybrid of the two - just to keep things interesting.

@abbysalsbury  
butterpieproductions.com

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### **Dawning Pollen Shorty**

Corn Maidens

2025

micaceous clay, beads, turquoise, shell, coral, he-she

Approx. 5 x 5 x 13 inches each

Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Artist in Guestrooms

#### **Biography**

Dawning Pollen Shorty is a talented sculptor and painter from Taos Pueblo. Her father, Robert D. Shorty, is an award-winning sculptor, writer and dancer. Her mother, Bernadette A. Track, studied modern dance and ballet at Juilliard and was one of R.C. Gorman's muses and models.

Dawning was educated in the arts at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) and at the University of New Mexico. She has won many awards for her micaceous clay female figures. In addition to being an artist, she is a longtime art educator in the Taos Public Schools.

[www.bryansgallery.com](http://www.bryansgallery.com)

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### **Sean Ratliff**

Untitled (Albuquerque, New Mexico), 2023

Untitled (Albuquerque, New Mexico), 2022

Palace Hotel (Antonito, Colorado), 2018

Vigil's (Antonito, Colorado), 2018

color photographs  
24 x 18 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Artist in Guestrooms

#### Biography

Sean Ratliff was born in Rocky Ford, Colorado in 1970 and grew up in the Four Corners region of New Mexico. His early inspiration came from exposure to punk flyers and action sports magazines. A later chance encounter with Adobe Illustrator led him to study in the field of Graphic Design. After earning a BFA in Visual Communication from Northern Arizona University, he headed to the Bay Area to work for Thrasher Magazine. Following his California stint, he returned to the Land of Enchantment to focus on establishing himself as a fine art photographer. Ratliff currently lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

@goldchain\_official  
<https://seanratliff.website/>

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#### Johnny Defeo

Boat launch at Quartzite, October.  
2024  
acrylic on panel  
14 x 18 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Artist in Guestrooms

#### Biography

Johnny DeFeo (b. 1985) received an MFA in painting from the University of Colorado in 2017. Shortly after graduating he co-founded Adventure Painting, a traveling artist residency, alongside painter Aaron Zulpo. The Adventure Painting residency takes artists out of their studios and into America's most beautiful locations with the goal of expanding the visual lexicon of landscape painting. Adventure Painting was selected as an Armory Show off-site project in 2021, and featured in the New York Times. DeFeo's aesthetic is wild and playful, utilizing a dose of humor to create objects that illuminate the connections between beauty both quintessential and manufactured. His work consists primarily of landscape scenes, many of which include animals. Often, the perspective expressed in these scenes is that of the animal, shifting the subject away from a human vantage point and revealing the mysteries of the natural world. Imagining that the creatures inhabiting America's wilderness could be storytellers through

objects and images the way that humans can, these objects portray the natural world with a tender perspective, and with mystical and legendary qualities

@johnnycakesdefeo  
www.johnnydefeo.com

See more of his work right down the street  
at the Valley, 203 Ledoux Street.

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## **Boramie Ann Sao**

Crocodile Tears, 2023  
Oil & graphite on linen  
Approx. 30 x 42 inches  
Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Artist in Juliette

### **Biography**

Boramie Sao is a self-taught Cambodian American Artist from Long Beach, California, currently residing in Taos, New Mexico. Sao reflects upon the challenging landscapes of the high desert where she lives, and ties a deep symbolism to any life that persists through the most tumultuous elements. She connects this symbolism to her heritage and ancestry, where the family stories passed down from her elders inspired the work she creates today. These intimate lessons she grew up with lie at the heart of her work, which would be left untold if not through oral or shared tradition.

Sao's acute observation of her environment and the meditative practice that has developed throughout the years of painting, gave her an understanding of balance and a profound appreciation for beauty within the natural world. The inherent stillness she strives to capture through her use of symbols, textures, colors and organic forms, are meant to tell these stories in a subtle, interpretive way. Sao's titles work in a narrative form, gesturing a hint of her own experiences while leaving space for imagination. Her intuitive color palettes and unique use of shapes dwell in the depths of each piece, leaving the viewer to question whether it is meant to hide or reveal something beyond the surface.

@boramieannsao  
boramieannsao.com

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## **Debbie Long**

Bullet Cities

Light and Glass

2005-2007

10 x 20 feet

Bullet casings found on the artist's walks in the New Mexico desert over a 2-year period, from 2005-2007.

Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Artist in Hotel Lobby

### **Biography**

Debbie Long is an artist who works with light, creating sculptures and immersive environments that shift in response to the natural world. For over a decade, she has focused on Light Ships—large-scale outdoor sculptures that use the sun and moon as their sole source of illumination. These chambers of color and glass are designed for visitors to sit inside and experience the gradual transformations of light throughout the day and night. Hundreds of handmade cast-glass objects catch and refract light from the sky, creating an evolving interior that responds to the cycles of the sun, passing clouds, and shifting moonlight.

The first of these works, Naima Light Ship, was built between 2012–2015, followed by Willa Light Ship 2015–2020, completed in her Taos studio. Each Light Ship invites visitors to slow down and engage deeply with the rhythms of the natural world—watching the sun set over hours, witnessing twilight's subtle shifts, or waiting for the moon to illuminate the space. These works encourage an embodied experience of time and light.

In addition to her Light Ships, Long creates installations, films, and sculptures exploring material, perception, and environment. Her work has been exhibited widely, including at the Harwood Museum of Art, High Desert Test Sites, LAND/ART New Mexico, Chimento Contemporary, and 5.Gallery in Santa Fe. Recognized by grants and residencies, she also worked as a studio assistant to Ken Price. Originally from Gallup, New Mexico, Long now lives and works in Taos, continuing to explore the transformative potential of light and space.

@debbie\_long

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## **Aron John Dubois**

### Orpheus' Clock

Acrylic, ink and gouache on handmade cotton rag paper in custom wood frame

39 x 55 in. / framed: 41 x 57 x 1.5 in

Courtesy of the The Valley

On Site: Featured Artist in Guestrooms

### Biography

Aron John Dubois (b.1989, Boulder, CO) is a painter and an internationally recognized tattoo artist based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. As a self-taught artist, Dubois has honed his craft in tattooing, painting, ceramics, and other media by meticulous study and self-directed practice. His work predominantly addresses the enigma of nature, corporeality, and archetypal drama through a lens influenced by art brut, folk mysticism, anthropology, and the grotesque. Working primarily on paper media with layered watercolor, ink, and gouache, he creates earthly altar-like compositions decorated with a symbolic language born of his own mythology and spiritual inquiry.

Represented by The Valley

[thevalleytaos.com/aron-john-dubois](http://thevalleytaos.com/aron-john-dubois)

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### Paulina Ho

#### "Drifting Away"

2023

Wood-fired Ceramic

Approx. 7 x 28½ x 3 inches

#### "Bonded"

2023

Wood-fired Ceramic

Approx. 7 x 7 x 7 inches

#### "The Story (Not The End)"

2023

Wood-fired Ceramic

Approx. 11 x 1 ½ x 1 ½ & 7 x 1 ½ x 1 ½ inches

Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Artist in Guestrooms

## Biography

Paulina Ho (b. 1991) is a New York artist based in Taos, New Mexico who creates graphic work that utilizes caricature as a means for introspection. By exaggerating scale and color, she immerses the viewer into her own fantastical world. Paulina's work balances between both literal and abstract visuals, while capturing a variety of emotions, both personal and universal.

@paulinapizza  
paulinaho.com

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## Johnny Ortiz-Concha

### Untitled Photography

Approx. 9 x 11 x 1 ½ inches each

Images of the land they are stewarding

Frames by Brandon Ortiz from wood harvested from the land

### Untitled Pottery

locally sourced clay

Approx. 12 x 6 x 2 ½, 12 x 3 ½ 12, 4 ½ x 4 x 4 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Chef of Juliette

## Biography

Johnny Ortiz-Concha was born and raised in the high desert of Northern New Mexico in Taos and comes from generations of ancestors who have been born and raised on the same land. New Mexico in all its complexity is complicated to define, as is Johnny. His blood is a mix of various cultures that have been settling New Mexico for centuries, primarily Tu-ah-ta ( Taos Pueblo ) and Spanish ( from mother Spain ).

Johnny is an award winning chef that has worked in some of the most interesting restaurants in the country and even helped run them. Now Johnny is less a chef and is inseparable from the ecosystem he has been working at building that is / shed, where he is intimate with each step of the process that goes into a / shed dinner.

Johnny first became enamored with food when his mother gave him a wild rose to eat and since has been delving into what it means "to cook". Once a passion solely based within the confines of a restaurant, now involves numerous vernacular practices of his terrain and culture.

@shed\_project  
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restaurantjuliette.com

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## **TILT [Taos Initiative for Life Together]**

### **Redi-Wall**

Metal fencing, stucco wire, 200 pounds of post-consumer plastic

Approx. 96 x 48 x 16 inches

Courtesy of Todd Wynward & Randy Martinez, TILT

On Site: Featured Artist of garden walls

### **Biography**

Through the social incubator that is TiLT, Todd Wynward and his allies stir together a lean & adaptive non-profit organization with an adobe co-housing hacienda, a host of innovative community-based projects, a strong dose of prophetic imagination, a taste for wilderness spirituality, a menu of immersive multi-cultural experiences and a handful of entrepreneurial microbusinesses in an attempt to create the better world we know is possible. At TiLT, we aspire to walk in the socially transformative footsteps of Saint Francis, Joanna Macy, Mahatma Gandhi and Vandana Shiva. We seek to humbly live into the inspiring lessons and life ways of the Pueblo peoples and the Hispanic agriculturalists and the Anglo creatives who came before, who learned to live well here together along the upper Rio Grande watershed for generations upon generations. We are deeply inspired by the justice-seeking, society-changing, heart-opening, mind-expanding, empire-resisting, God-following, peace-making lineage of Jesus, the old testament Prophets, ancient wilderness spirituality, the early Anabaptists, MLK and the Freedom School movement, and the witness of Latin American liberation base communities. We seek to find heaven on earth for all, right here, in our watershed.

[www.taostilt.org](http://www.taostilt.org)

### **Repurposing Plastic: Turning Waste into Walls**

What is this thing? What you see before you is a marketable product called the Redi-Wall, an 8' x 50" x 16" modular wall. It consists of a frame constructed by artisan Randy Martinez of metal fencing and stucco wire, which he then stuffed with 200 pounds of post-consumer plastic. He used a pneumatic hog-ring gun to create the metal basket. The plastic sheeting has been cut away to reveal the Rediwall's contents.

### **Why do we build walls out of waste plastic?**

Our modern consumer economy worldwide has caused a plastic pollution problem at a global scale. Despite what institutions lead us to believe, hardly any plastic is actually recycled. Every

day, millions of tons of plastic are thoughtlessly dumped into landfills or in our precious oceans, increasing our global problem. In recent decades, plastic pollution has become a global pandemic that urgently needs a global response.

When China stopped taking the world's plastic in 2019, a few of us in Taos had an idea: Why don't communities turn their waste into walls, all over the world? Plastic is an obvious material to repurpose locally for building since it is lightweight, waterproof, flexible, insulative, and has a high tensile strength when crushed, exerting an outward force to make the panels surprisingly rigid.

Why is this RediWall inside Hotel Willa?

In 2020, The Repurposing Plastic Project [RPP] was born through TiLT (Taos Initiative for Life Together). Over the past four years, Randy Martinez, Todd Wynward and the rest of the RPP crew have used this technology to create privacy patios, perimeter walls, a tool shed, windbreaks, a studio/barn, even a carport and workshop. Two structures built of repurposed plastic have even been approved by Taos County Planning & Zoning building inspectors, thanks to architect Doug Eichelberger.

Hotel Willa was the first corporation in Taos to contract RPP to build a wall out of repurposed plastic for their new hotel. You might not have noticed it as you came in--it's the humble, attractive perimeter parking wall that protects the front of the hotel property from the busy streetscape. Conventionally, these types of walls are built out of thousands of pounds of imported cement block...but this one contains more than 2000 pounds of Taos' repurposed plastic!

RPP has now diverted more than 60,000 pounds of plastic from the Taos landfill over the last four years. Even though this is a lot of plastic, it is only a tiny fraction of our community's waste. A fraction, and yet a demonstration of the possible. We challenge other local businesses to follow in Hotel Willa's footsteps, and help create a sustainable local economy for repurposed plastic products. This RediWall hanging in front of you is an inspiring and artistic example of something creative we all can do with what we call "waste." By repurposing the plastic we have and reducing the amount we still buy, communities everywhere can create art together: the art of living in better relation with the land that nurtures us.

To purchase Redi-Walls for your own project, contact Todd Wynward and Randy Martinez at [rpptaos@gmail.com](mailto:rpptaos@gmail.com)

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**Mark Kemper**

Tequila Moonrise  
digital print

14 x 11 inches

Courtesy of Gak Stonn's Taos Print & Photography

On Site: Featured Artist for Hotel Security

#### Biography

Mark Kemper is a multifaceted artist based whose work encompasses visual arts, music, and storytelling. His artistic journey is deeply influenced by his early aspiration to become a cowboy—a dream he humorously acknowledges he's still pursuing, equipped with a hat and a "pony made of steel, with an engine."

Kemper's creative endeavors are characterized by highly detailed pen and ink drawings that capture the spirit of the Southwest, particularly New Mexico and Taos. Beyond the visual arts, Kemper is known for his musical talents and storytelling abilities, which have endeared him to the Taos community. His contributions have been recognized for their ability to brighten anyone's day, showcasing his dedication to enriching the local cultural landscape.

Kemper's educational background includes studies in Fine/Studio Arts at the University of Nebraska at Omaha

[taosprint.com](http://taosprint.com)

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#### Dean Pulver

Day to Day, 2022

Dyed Walnut

Approx. 99 x 20 x 20 inches

Echo, 2022

Douglas Fir

Approx. 97 x 14 x 14 inches

Courtesy of 203 Fine Art, Taos

On Site: Featured Artist in Gallery

#### Biography

Dean Pulver is a full-time sculptor and furniture maker working in wood. Growing up in a multi-cultural family of artists in Minneapolis, Minnesota, he was influenced by his German and Irish father, a commercial illustrator, art director and painter, and his Japanese mother, a clothing designer and fiber artist.

Dean graduated from the Philadelphia College of Art in 1987 in sculpture. He has been exhibiting and teaching extensively in the United States and his works are shown in galleries and museum exhibitions and collections including the Fuller Craft Museum, Bellevue Art Museum and The Center for Art in Wood.

He has taught at Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Penland School of Crafts, and the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship. In 2017 he was awarded the Bob Stocksdale International Award for Creativity from the Center for Art in Wood.

Living in Taos, New Mexico for over 20 years with his wife, ceramic artist Abby Salsbury, Pulver and Salsbury are currently developing “Taos Mesa Arts”, a center for exhibitions, classes, retreats and residencies.

@dean\_pulver  
deanpulver.com

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## **Ky Sturges**

Pipe Creature  
1” steel pipe and pressure gauge  
Approx. 11 x 16 x 8 ½ inches  
Courtesy of the Artist

On Site: Featured Artist of Hotel Plumbing

### **About**

Ky Sturges works for Phoenix Mechanical. Phoenix Mechanical, LLC has been a trusted name in Taos since 1971, providing expert residential and commercial services in plumbing, electrical, heating, and mechanical systems. Founded by Bob Draper with a “Yes, I can” philosophy, the company has grown to employ over 30 experienced tradespeople, each bringing 10–20 years of expertise to the community. Licensed in general building, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, and utility line work, Phoenix Mechanical is known for its commitment to quality workmanship and responsive service. Whether addressing emergencies or undertaking new construction projects, they are dedicated to meeting the needs of Taos residents and businesses with professionalism and care .

phoenixmechanical.net

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## **Izumi Yokoyama**

Shelter

2018

pigment ink pen drawing on paper

36.5 x 29.25 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

Featured Local Artist in Lobby

### **Biography**

Izumi Yokoyama is a multi-media artist who lives and works in Taos, New Mexico. Born in Niigata, Japan, Yokoyama graduated with an MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and moved to the high desert. She works in ink pen drawings, installations, murals, calligraphy, interactive community projects, and performances. Yokoyama has shown her work locally, nationally, and internationally. Harwood Museum of Art recently acquired her new drawing in their permanent collection and has a solo show at the Denver Botanic Gardens Museum in 2026.

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