

STUDIO

THESE DOORS STAY OPEN

BY AIMEE HECKEL

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DOORZ

New Website Connects Art-Lovers With Artists in Unprecedented Way



SUSAN WASINGER'S STUDIO



JEROME COFFEY



SALLY ECKERT

AS AN ARTIST IN ULTRA-CREATIVE BOULDER, YOU CAN FEEL LOST AMONG THE CROWD.

Until three special weeks of the year: Open Studios, when local artists open their studios to anyone who wants to come in, chat and watch art being made.

That's Bill Snider's favorite time of the year, as an artist. So much, in fact, that he wants it to last year-round. And while he's at it, he wants to help other artists around the world do it, too.

That's how StudioDoorz began.

StudioDoorz.com is a Boulder-based start-up designed to connect art-lovers with artists who want to share their stories and studios with visitors — by appointment any time of year, one-on-one. At its core, it's a free-to-use database of artists who welcome visitors. Just search by location, browse the various profiles (complete with work samples) and connect with your artists of choice to book a visit.

Although it has an "open studio" feel, StudioDoorz is not affiliated with the Open Studios Tour, and it's meant to complement the annual event, not compete with it.

Snider calls StudioDoorz the OpenTable of art. (OpenTable is a restaurant reservation website; read reviews and reserve a table at restaurants around the world.)

Even more, he writes on his website, "Just as the farm-to-table movement is putting people in touch with their food sources, StudioDoorz is creating a connection between people and the artists who make the art."

From a visitor's perspective, it gives you up-close access to artists that you wouldn't normally have (or be able to arrange quickly with

a click), whether you're looking for a unique experience in your hometown or when you are traveling. StudioDoorz is currently offered in 30 different cities and towns in six states, with plans to grow in 2021.

For artists, it's an inexpensive and effective marketing move.

"The whole notion of 'getting found' as an artist is really an issue," Snider says.

In an artist-rich town like Boulder, he says, there simply aren't enough galleries to accommodate all of the artists, and the ones that



NATASHA MISTRY



THERESA HABERKORN



BOBBI VISCHI



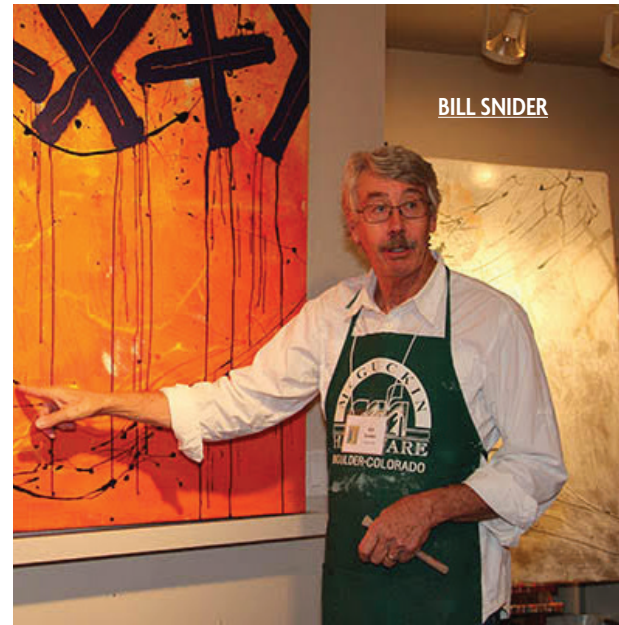
MITCH LEVIN



SUSAN WASINGER



BELGIN YUCELEN



BILL SNIDER



TIFFANY CROWDER



MARGARET DONHARL



SUSAN ALBERS



MEGAN MCCARTHY



VISITORS TO BILL SNIDER'S STUDIO



SHAUN MINNÉ (RIGHT) & STUDIO VISITOR

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INGA PAE



KELLY PETERS



CAROLINE DOUGLAS

do exist can be difficult to get into. Beyond Boulder, some bigger galleries can get upwards of 1,000 submissions a month, he says.

“That’s the gallery world,” Snider says. “For a lot of artists, a real, full-blown gallery is simply not an option.”

That’s not an indictment of galleries, however. Snider acknowledges galleries are a business, and if they curate a group of artists that are well-received, it doesn’t make sense to change that.

But even if you can get your art featured in a gallery, that doesn’t necessarily lead to positive cash flow, he says. He speaks from experience. His paintings have hung in galleries in Boulder and Denver.

“The vast majority of what I sell is out of my studio,” he says.

The catch: getting people to come visit the studio. That’s why Open Studios was so effective; Snider says he noticed two things during these events. First, he made meaningful connections with art-lovers and the community. And second, that’s when he sold most of his art.

The two seemed to be connected, he says.

People seemed to appreciate art more when they could attach a person to it. See where it came from, and how it was made. He says visitors are often surprised by how detailed his painting process is. He works on wooden panels, building up layers of paint, then

sanding and grinding it off, before adding more layers. You have a captive audience, and they’re there because they want to be; they’re interested in your work.

“It changes the relationship,” he says. “When you buy a piece of artwork over the internet, it comes in a box and it might as well be a pair of shoes. When you buy it in person, there’s a memory attached to it and more meaning.”

Snider looks around his Boulder home and points out various pieces of art he purchased while traveling. An Eskimo carving on the table came from an Eskimo village in the Bering Strait, when he was visiting for his past career in the film business.

“I remember that place and the guy who did this,” Snider says. “It’s hard to say it adds value, but the story is a form of value.”

Because of that, many visitors come back year after year, he says. This leads to repeat sales.

“You travel. You buy something. When you take it home, it comes with a story,” he says.

He thinks about a wooden bowl he bought from a man on the beach in Costa Rica. Whenever he sees that bowl, he thinks about that memory.

Then there’s the world of typical online art collections. It might be easier to be picked up by an online gallery, but that can feel overwhelming.

“The online world is huge in numbers. You can easily be swallowed up in it and people will never find you,” Snider says.

StudioDoorz has a built-in filtering system. It breaks down artists by location. If bigger cities get too full, the website might even filter by neighborhood.

Although the website is new (the idea began early 2020 but didn’t fully launch until that fall), he says, it’s an extension of an established idea. Countless cities offer open studio tours, some of which are 50 years old with hundreds of artists, he says.

“We haven’t reinvented the wheel,” Snider says. He hopes they’re just making it more accessible — for locals and visitors the 49 other weeks of the year. This taps into the continued trend of “experiential travel.” For example, more than 78 percent of millennials want an educational adventure, according to thewanderingrv.com.

In its early phase, StudioDoorz currently features more than 100 artists. They pay \$5 per month, and the visits are free. Boulder County has the biggest saturation of artists, taking up about two-thirds of

the listings (due to Snider’s local connections). Next biggest is Sedona, Arizona. You can also find artists in Sante Fe, California, Missouri, Oregon and other New Mexico and Arizona towns. Any artist is welcome to join.

In addition to a website, StudioDoorz has two newsletters: one for artists to coach them on enhancing their listings and another for art-lovers that features different artists to check out.

In the future, Snider says they might create an app. Until then, he says it’s best to browse and plan on your computer (although the mobile version of the website works well when you’re on the road). Each listing says how to arrange a visit. Tip: Book it in advance. Not all artists will be ready — or there — if you drop in for a surprise visit.

MEET THE MAKER: TED BRADLEY

WWW.TRAVELBOULDER.COM/MEET-THE-MAKER-BOULDER-ARTIST-TED-BRADLEY

Local Artists

HERE IS A LOOK AT SOME OF THE MANY BOULDER COUNTY ARTISTS FEATURED ON THE STUDIOORZ WEBSITE.



LAURA BRENTON, BOULDER

Brenton is an abstract painter who has made her mark throughout the state and internationally. She grew up in Boulder. Her inspiration is “the unexpected, the magic of uncovering form and color.”



LISA GAKYO SCHAEWE, BOULDER

Lisa has a background as a Zen student, and she considers her creative process as a form of meditation. Her serene artwork embodies that.



JULIA BRIGHT, BOULDER

Originally from the Soviet Union, Julie studied with the renowned artist and teacher David Leffel, and now specializes in representational still lifes and seascapes in the abstract realism style. Living and working in Western Europe allowed her to observe the timeless beauty in the work of the “Old Masters” whose masterpieces still inform her art.



KAZOO OBA, LAFAYETTE

This potter and sculptor was born in Kobe and spent his early years in Japan. His handmade pottery “may be slightly odd-shaped and irregular, just like us, but that’s a part of the beauty.”

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