


Colorado Creatives Redux: Sabin Aell

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Sabin Aell builds a pebble-mosaic patio at Neu Hinterland in Morrison.

Courtesy of Sabin Aell

[Susan Froyd](#) | October 25, 2018 | 8:45am

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We first showcased artist, mover and shaker Sabin Aell as a [Colorado Creative in March of 2011](#), when the series was still an experiment and she was one of our first guinea pigs. Now she's helping us test the waters again for the redux series, with good reason. A [hands-on artist who knows her tools](#), Aell has process-heavy public art installations all over town, represented by Walker Fine Art.

With her husband, Randy Rushton, the Austrian artist built up the Hinterland Art Space in RiNo from scratch, into a beautiful hand-hewn exhibit space with a freewheeling, creative openness that nurtured the artists, performers and friends who stopped by. Together, they were named Westword MasterMinds for their brave work there, which later came to an end in 2016 when their building was slated for redevelopment. But they didn't give up. Aell and Rushton resettled on some land in Morrison, determined to rebuild Hinterland in an old barn. As you'll learn below, it's been a slow, expensive and grueling work in progress. Let Aell walk you through it as she answers the CC Redux questionnaire.

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Sabin Aell, artist and fashion plate.

Courtesy of Sabin Aell

How has your creative life grown or suffered since you last answered the CC questionnaire?

The last eight years have been terrific and fast-paced. I was offered a rich spectrum of possibilities to place art in public and unusual spaces. I love to create proposals for public artwork designed specially for places where you don't expect it naturally, like elevators. Applying art in the elevator at the newly renovated McNichols building was my favorite project in 2017.



A before-and-after plan for Neu Hinterland.

Courtesy of Sabin Aell

As a creative, what's your vision for a more perfect Denver?

I feel that with the gentrification of the RiNo Art District, art dispersed and got pushed back. But I am hopeful it will come back in unexpected new ways. I would love to see creative, mind-boggling architecture and new transformed interpretations of our cityscapes that are more human-, animal- and nature-friendly. I admire the work of Austrian-born Christopher Alexander, an architect and design theorist and currently professor at the University of California. He is probably mostly famous for his book *A Pattern Language*. His newer book *The Nature of Order: An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe* is highly practical and philosophical. Photos of buildings and discussions of each demonstrate exactly what Alexander means when he talks about living structure and using life-creating processes to create beautiful environments and buildings. These places are more than just pleasant to look at or be in — they reach an archetypal level of human experience, reaching across centuries, across continents, across cultures, across technology, across building materials and climates. They connect to us all. They connect us to our own feelings.

There will never be a perfect Denver or Colorado. It is already wonderful, and I love being part of it. How Denver evolves will be a community effort and exciting to watch.



Sabin Aell and Randy Rushton move earth for their permaculture project.

Courtesy of Sabin Aell

It's a challenging time for artists in the metro area, who are being priced out of the city by gentrification and rising rents. What can they do about it, short of leaving?

One thing that could help is if laws would be changed to allow groups of people to live together in one place more easily. Laws that are in place right now make it really difficult for more than one family to live and share one home. We bought a property together with another couple and formed a tenancy in common. Banks and any other financial institution will and would not give us a loan because of the unfamiliarity of the situation, and do not even try to work with us together. The idea of artist/friends in a communal-living situation on a couple of acres seems like a brilliant solution to me.

Generally, I think a shift in values has to happen where richness in form of money will not be the first and foremost goal people strive for. If we humans would be more in tune with our true nature, we would care more for one another and build sustainable landscapes that make our hearts sing. The air quality would be delicious; the dwellings built would make people thrive. Architecture would almost seem to have living and breathing qualities embedded within surroundings of beautiful fauna and flora. The mind would have room to wander and explore more easily and be delighted. Life should feel easy, not scrambling hard to make money for astronomical rents or mortgages to fill the pockets of investors who build short-lived buildings

only for profit, not considering the long-term side effects. I am sure there are brilliant minds out there coming up with stunningly creative counter models we are all waiting for and can be part of.



Aell's public-art installation in the elevator at the McNichols Building.

Courtesy of Sabin Aell

What's your dream project?

My most important project right now is to develop our new property and meld multi-functional indoor-outdoor gallery/event spaces within our own living and work areas. Neu Hinterland, as we call it, will be an experiment implementing sustainable values and permaculture mindset. Randy (my husband) and I are free thinkers who mold and bounce our ideas off of each other constantly. Ideas evolve as we go. We are building and financing this project by ourselves. Our [Indiegogo campaign](#) helped, but covered only a small fraction of the funds that we will need to complete the project. We have to be resourceful and smart. It will be interesting how this big project will transpire.

If you died tomorrow, what or whom would you come back as?

I doesn't matter to me. Whatever it will be, I think it will be fabulously challenging!



Detail from an installation by Sabin Aell at Walker Fine Art.

Courtesy of Sabin Aell

Who is your favorite Colorado Creative?

I love and admire [YetiWeurks](#), the team of Nick Geurts and Ryan Elmendorf. Their latest project, "[Seesaw Wave Machine](#)," which was installed at Burning Man this year, was visually gorgeous, and I wish I could have tried it out. "Seesaw Wave Machine" is a gigantic swing mechanism and looked brilliant.

There is also [Shane Evans](#), who builds gigantic fire-spitting robots out of scrap metal and airplane parts. I love his style and how he goes about work. He approaches the creative

process with such a force and determination that I highly admire.



Aell creates an indoor mural for the Arvada Center's *In Sight On Site* exhibition.

Courtesy of Sabin Aell

What's on your agenda for the coming year?

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I usually have a very loose agenda, as life needs room for breathing to move with the flow. My main focus is on public commissions. Art in public spaces is where I would love to see my work mostly. Secondly, developing our new space will take time and is a continuous project over the next upcoming years.

Who do you think will (or should) get noticed in the local arts community in the coming year?

Steve Legg. Steve showed at Hinterland twice and is producing constantly. His work is humorous and socially critical, and I love it.

Learn more about plans for Neu Hinterland on the website and on Facebook. Keep up with Sabin Aell and her work at her home page and on Facebook and Instagram.

Susan Froyd is a Denver native who studied English, Art and finally Journalism at Metro State University, and also managed movie theaters and sold art supplies before landing at *Westword* in 1992. Decades later, she still feels privileged to serve the vibrant artists in all disciplines who make our town a more engaging place to live.

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