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ENTERTAINMENT

You've driven past Denver's Dikeou Pop-Up space, but never seen it

The former Colfax Avenue home of Jerry's Records serves as a temporary art gallery now featuring work by Devon Dikeou, Anicka Yi and Lizzi Bougatsos

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The stairway leading to the basement is spray-painted with bright colors. The Dikeou Pop-Up art space is in a former record store at 312 E. Colfax Ave. in Denver. (Photos by Kathryn Scott Osler, *The Denver Post*)

Artist Devon Dikeou explores the space between spaces, or to make it metaphysical, the moment between moments, and nothing illustrates those milliseconds of transition better than the stage curtain.

Who are people behind it? And who are they in front of it, when the world is watching? And how does that change in the instant they walk through?

Dikeou's latest project is an investigation of those very specific stage accessories, and it is, as Dikeou's work can be, obsessive and exhaustive. She's re-creating small-scale replicas of the curtains featured on TV talk shows over the past five decades.

Dikeou has commissioned versions of the velvety, gold backdrop Ed Sullivan stood in front of, and the bejeweled, organza drapery that revealed Merv Griffin's guests. She has a curtain sewn from the same designer fabric that co-starred with Conan O'Brien and another from the shiny, blue material featured on the first Jimmy Fallon show. She has found inspiration from the sets of Jack Parr, Johnny Carson, Jimmy Kimmel and others.

They come together into an installation at the Dikeou Pop-Up gallery on East Colfax Avenue, which is very much a transitional space itself.

For three decades, the retail storefront was home to Jerry's Records, a Denver landmark that closed two years ago. The way development is booming in Denver, the building could become anything in short order; it's a block from the Capitol and prime real estate.

But for now, it's a roughed-out gallery and performance venue that hosts a wide variety of exhibitions and events. The space serves as a much-looser outpost for the more formal Dikeou Collection, the downtown museum where Dikeou's family houses its contemporary art collection.

It's not anything goes at the Pop-Up, as much as it is anything that fits organically. That includes music, thanks to the building's history as a longtime purveyor of vinyl records. When the previous tenant departed, it left 5,000 LPs behind in the basement, a collection the Dikeou increased to 15,000 pieces, buying surplus albums from radio station KGNU.

So, DJs spin there a lot during public events, which include regular showcases for live jazz and literary readings. Artists use the space for purposes as diverse as one-night performance pieces and band rehearsals. Also, there's a family workshop on the first Saturday of every month.



A nod to the former record store, there are LP covers on a portion of the ceiling in the basement.

And since Jerry's Records' refuse also included scores of films on the now-defunct laser disc format, Dikeou found a player and hosts a monthly series of films from the 1970s. The programming is curated with great imagination — and an open mind — by director Saniego Sanchez.

Still, the Pop-Up space keeps its visual art offerings serious, and challenging and connected logically to the Dikeou collection's holdings.

The upstairs currently features work by Lizzi Bougatsos, who takes a lighthearted but cynical look at present-day society. She incorporates found objects, posters, American flags and commercial signs into pieces that live somewhere between wall-hanging and collage.

With pop-culture references to comedian Tracy Morgan and some blunt language about body parts, they're not everyone's cup of coffee. But they're wry and real and offer plenty to look at.

In the basement, there are the decaying sculptures of Anicka Yi, who presents a series of wall-mounted sweaters with real flower arrangements extruding from the necks. The flowers are coated in panko bread crumbs, deep fried and left to rot. She's appealing to multiple senses here — sight, smell, taste — and offering a visceral take on the decomposition of living things.

It all leads to Dikeou's own works, the curtains, which play out two ways.

Lining the wall of a separate room and hung edge to edge, they come together as a single, immersive object that simultaneously analyzes recent pop history and the honors the craft of sewing. There's a lot of cinching and seaming going on, and these objects are well-made.

But they are also separate works — each is 10 feet square and a different color and texture so they stand alone. They resemble abstract works on canvas, although they are "painted" with fabric, instead of actual oils or acrylics.

This kind of duality permeates the work and makes being around it a rewarding experience. The curtains are, at the same time, individual object and installation, humorous and serious, visual and tactile, high-concept and handmade. They investigate transition, but they exist in transition themselves. That may not be the intention, but that is the effect, and it's a lot of fun.



Saniego Sanchez moves a loud speaker into place. The gallery will host musicals as well as literary events in the space.

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DIKEOU POP-UP. Open **Wednesdays through Fridays 11 a.m.-5 p.m.** and for special events.
312 E. Colfax Ave. **Free.** 303-623-3001 or dikeoucollection.org.

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