



Denver's best-kept art secret is on the 16th Street Mall

By Becky Morgan Apr 10, 2014



At the corner of 16th and California streets in downtown Denver, thousands of people get on and off light rail every day, rushing to business meetings or ambling to the stores and restaurants on the 16th Street Mall.

But hardly any of them would know they are passing by one of the most unusual art galleries in the city.

The Dikeou Collection is inconspicuously housed within a cluster of otherwise nondescript office suites on the fifth floor of the historic Colorado Building. The sign in the building's small lobby is hardly noticeable from the street as you walk past the neighboring Jamba Juice and T-Mobile stores.

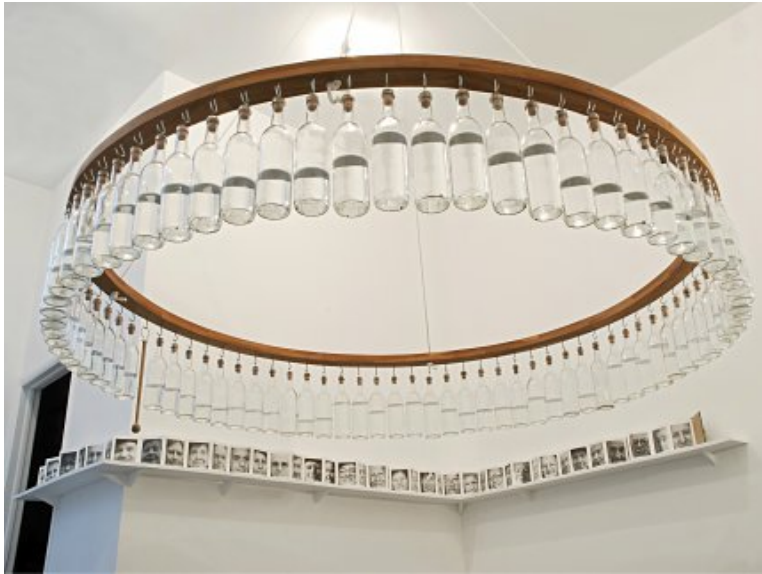
The Dikeou Collection is owned by artist and Denver native Devon Dikeou and her brother Pany. But Devon Dikeou is the primary force behind the gallery.

"Denver is in this place where, with the opening of the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Hamilton Building at the Denver Art Museum, the Clyfford Still Museum and, of course, the Kirkland too, there's a lot of places for people who are interested in art to go see it," Dikeou says. "Denver is on a cusp of becoming a different type of city because of these art opportunities and we wanted to take advantage of that and to share the collection with an audience that is already growing."

Dikeou has been buying art for almost 20 years. More than 30 international artists are represented in the Dikeou Collection, which features photography, drawings, sculptures and a number of large installations.

Two gigantic inflatable pink rabbits greet visitors to the Collection, the work of Japanese artist Momoyo Torimitsu.

There's also an installation of wine bottles tuned to specific musical notes that visitors can "play." Its creator is New York-based artist Paul Ramirez Jonas.



Meanwhile, an intimidatingly large parquet covered cube blocks the entrance to one office suite. At 16-feet wide, 15-feet deep and 5-feet high, New York City artist Wade Guyton's work forces visitors to either walk around it or climb over it to get to the next room.



Wade Guyton (USA, b. 1972), *The Room Moved the Way Blocked (Stage 1)*, 1998.

Another work by Torimitsu startles visitors as they wind through the office suites.

What appears to be a Japanese business man crawling on the gallery floor is really an amazingly life-like robot (titled "Miyata Jiro") that crawled the streets of Paris, London and New York's Wall Street before being purchased by Dikeou in the late 1990s to add to the collection.

The installation includes videos showing the reactions of people encountering the robot crawling streets worldwide.

In addition to creating art herself, Dikeou also curates and publishes zingmagazine – a glossy, 400-page annual publication that the curator-gallery owner uses to enable artists, musicians and authors to create work without the limits of being juried.

Launched in 1995, zing became the inspiration for the Dikeou Collection in 1998 as a means to bring the magazine's work to life.

"We operate as an extension of zingmagazine," Dikeou Collection Director Saniego Sanchez says. "Zingmagazine is a 2-D publication. We're like the 3-D – the tangible version of what zing is."

As her collection grew – and as neighboring office suites opened up – Devon Dikeou expanded the space in the Colorado Building which is owned by her family's real estate company.

The gallery space now occupies 10,000 square feet. Next month, an additional 400 square feet of office suites will open to accommodate the collection's more newly acquired works. This month, however, the Dikeou Collection will launch a more visible offshoot – what the owner calls a "pop-up" space.

Dikeou Pop-Up: Colfax opens next Friday, April 18 at 312 East Colfax, a space once occupied by Jerry's Record Exchange, with an exhibit by Brooklyn artist Lizzie Bougatsos. The Dikeou family also owns this building.

The Dikeou Collection may be little known, but it makes an impact both on casual visitors and art industry professionals.

"I think it's a hidden gem of Denver," Metro State student Julie Latham says. Latham often brings friends to the Dikeou Collection. "Everybody has a mixed opinion, but they'll always remember it and it'll always change you a little bit."

Peter Doroshenko, Executive Director of Dallas Contemporary, an art museum in Dallas, which presents works by regional, national and international artists, included the Dikeou Collection as one of the 50 collections featured in his 2010 book "Private Spaces for Contemporary Art."

Doroshenko says that what defines the Dikeou Collection is the personal relationship between the gallery's owner and the artists whose work is on display.

"I think it was one of the few collections I've ever seen where it really focused in on the collector," Doroshenko says. "It's not so much about the art world or other issues that a lot of collectors buy art for."

The Dikeou Collection is open and free of charge, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 11 a.m.-5 p.m., as well as during their series of special music and literary events.

The Opening Reception for Dikeou Pop-Up: Colfax with Lizzi Bougatsos is Friday, April 18 from 7-9 p.m. at 312 East Colfax Avenue.

Lizzie Bougatsos will also give an artist talk on Saturday, April 19 at 4 p.m. at the Dikeou Collection at 1615 California Street, 5th Floor.

<http://www.cpr.org/news/story/denver-s-best-kept-art-secret-16th-street-mall>