

Denverite

I may have slipped through a wormhole when I accidentally wandered into a wild art collection downtown

The Dikeou Collection takes up an entire floor of a downtown office building and is open to anyone who also wants to step out of reality for a moment.



Art at the Dikeou Collection inside the Colorado Building at California and 16th Streets, Sept. 26, 2018.
(Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)

Kevin Beaty - Oct 01 2018

I had a weird Wednesday. On the way to take a portrait inside the Colorado Building, an ornate building that dates back to 1898, I noticed some odd art on the first floor and a sign for the Dikeou Collection on the 5th floor. After I got my shot, I had to see what this was all about. I wandered out of the staircase and into a hallway, searching for the Collection entrance. I could see some large sculptures

through office windows, but I didn't realize how much art was on the floor until I made it through door around the corner.

And then I was inside and loudly reacting to two giant, inflatable bunnies. This was all very unexpected, and it felt like I'd been ripped from reality.

Entranced, I wandered deeper into the series of connected, snaking office spaces full of art. After being briefly startled by a life-size sculpture of a man on the floor, I stumbled into an office where I met Hayley Richardson, the Dikeou Collection's director.



This guy scared the heck out of me. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)

“Where am I?”

Thankfully, Richardson had answers.

Sisters Devon and Pany Dikeou established the collection in 1998. It's their private art collection, but they opened doors to the public in 2003. You, too, can slip through the wormhole at 1615 California St. Wednesday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Richardson said it's not unusual for private collections to open their doors like this, but it's more common outside of the U.S. and not much so in Denver. The American Museum of Western Art, located at 1727 Tremont Place downtown, is an Anschutz family collection and the only other example Richardson could think of that's regularly open.

Devon Dikeou is an artist herself, and Richardson said the public display is part of her multi-pronged approach to her work.

"Her practice as an artist is all about intertwining these different modes of experiencing art or working in the arts: curating, collecting, publishing, making art, exhibiting," she said. "That's all swirled together."

Many of the artists represented in the collection first appeared in zingmagazine, a New York City-based publication that Devon founded in 1995. Her relationships with those artists, Richardson said, have been a big driver of her acquisitions.

"There's a lot of personal connections that are really important that tie this together, as well as collecting art that's kind of scary or difficult to collect," she said, "things that are really large or fragile materials."

Like a life-size cardboard race car.



Like a life-size cardboard race car. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)

Everything in the collection is on display, and it's still growing. In fact, in 2014 they expanded into the space on E. Colfax Avenue formerly occupied by Jerry's Record Exchange. The Dikeou family owns many of the buildings on that block.

They use the Colfax venue for events (where, yes, they spin Jerry's old records that are now also part of the collection) and there's more artwork on display downstairs. It is also open 11-5, Wednesday-Friday.

Richardson said those events are important to let people know they exist. They put on tours, educational workshops and artists talks.

"We do a jazz series," Richardson said, "film screenings, literary events – they're all free and open to the public."

All this, she hopes, will mean less bewildered people will wander in from off the street and more folks will actually be seeking them out.

"A lot of people call us a hidden gem still," she said. "It's a cute term to have but it's nice to break away from that a little bit."



The Colorado Building at California and 16th Streets. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



The 5th floor hallway leading into the Dikeou Collection. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



A glimpse of some art from the hallway. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



Some pieces take up entire rooms. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



There is all kinds of media represented inside. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



That plaid guy is pretty great. Also, that photo on the right is one in a series of grainy, black-and-white photos of mosh pits. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



+1 for the messaging here. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



The odd location, inside a series of offices, makes for an interesting, snaking floor layout that makes everything all the more mysterious. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



This is a detail from the piece located on the first floor that caught my eye on the way in. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



The Dikeou Collection extension at Jerry's Record Exchange on E. Colfax Avenue, Sept. 28, 2018. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



Records acquired from Jerry's Record Exchange. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



An installation by Devon Dikeou inside the old basement at Jerry's Record Exchange. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)



Art from the Dikeou Collection inside the old basement at Jerry's Record Exchange. The walls were like this when they moved in, and they decided to keep it like it was. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)