

In ‘Resilience’ at the Red Brick, nine Aspen area artists share timely new work

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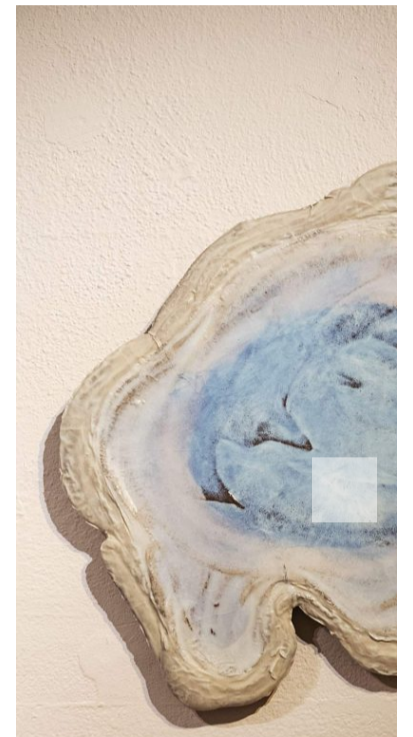
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Ceramic pieces by Louise Deroualle hangs in the Red Brick gallery space on Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020. (Kelsey Brunner/The Aspen Times)

Kelsey Brunner/The Aspen Times

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A ceramic self-portrait by Louise Deroualle hangs in the Red Brick gallery space on Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020. (Kelsey Brunner/The Aspen Times)

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What: ‘Resilience’ group exhibition

Where: Red Brick Center for the Arts and redbrickaspen.com ↗

When: Through Oct. 29

More info: The gallery is now open to the public Tuesday-Thursday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and by appointment. redbrickaspen.com ↗

Last year, in the beforetimes, the Red Brick Center for the Arts exhibition team and Pitkin County Commissioner Greg Poschman brainstormed ways that the art gallery might use art to contribute to vital conversations about the issues affecting locals.

They decided addressing the Roaring Fork Valley’s longstanding struggle with mental health and suicide was a productive place to start, and from there came upon the theme of “Resilience.”

They couldn’t have known, of course, that the resulting group exhibition would open six months into a global pandemic in September 2020, with an attendant economic crisis causing unprecedented local jobless rates, keeping classrooms closed, upending daily life and posing new mental and emotional challenges for all.

As everyone here and beyond is drawing on new wells of resilience to push through the pandemic, the Red Brick’s “Resilience” [opened online](#) ↗ and in the gallery.

“It did become more relevant,” Red Brick director Sarah Roy said this week during a walk-through of the show. “For the viewer, we hope that it resonates stronger because of what we are all experiencing collectively and how we are being challenged to be resilient, our need for it and our ability for it.”



They didn't change the concept or the artists after the pandemic hit, though some of the participants made new work about the pandemic.

The exhibition includes pieces selected by Jeannette Bullock, art therapist at the Aspen Hope Center — works that resulted from a workshop with the mental health nonprofit's staff to create symbols of resilience.

Painter Stanley Bell contributed 12 pieces, working on a new small scale that brings his signature abstract style — elements of graffiti, comics and drip painting smashed thrillingly together — in 10-by-10-inch square wood panels. The Carbondale-based artist had taken a full year off of painting before making these.

All 12 of Bell's "Resilience" pieces have already sold. A single collector took the dozen the night that the show went online in September.

Multi-disciplinary artist Deborah Jones looked to the natural world for visual representations of resilience, documenting the toll of climate change on ice bridges and glaciers in textured and dimensional carved wood and acrylic pieces.

Louise Deroualle, the ceramic studio coordinator at Anderson Ranch Arts Center, contributed clay pieces that use landscape and the natural world as vehicles for self-portrait. Among them are her resonant "In Solitude there is Consolation" series — warm yet haunting ceramic representations of the desolate Nebraska landscape — and her nontraditional self-portraits based on Salt Lake and a passing train.

The "In Solitude" pieces in the show come from her work in graduate school before Deroualle came to Snowmass Village, but the project [picked up again during the coronavirus lockdown](#) period. Deroualle began taking photos of her view from the Ranch campus and experimenting with new ceramic landscapes to continue the series with new COVID-19 perspective.

"This time we are living in, there is a lot of solitude with our thoughts, a lot of introspection," she said of the work in April. "I find the consolation out my window looking at nature."

Brian Colley, the prolific Carbondale-based illustrator and artist whose solo exhibition at R2 Gallery closes this week, executed his project in the weeks before the Red Brick opening. Seeking to give local resilience a face, he made portraits of the friends he sees in, each touched with a bit of stardust. (Browse these 14 drawings and you may recognize locals like arts champion Amy Kimberly, artist Stanley Bell and Deborah Jones along with Colley himself).

"He realized resilience was about relationships, so he drew these beautiful, intimate, emotionally deep portraits of his friends from the Roaring Fork Valley," Roy said.

To underscore the hyperlocal-to-global scope of the exhibition, Colley's portraits hang directly across from two photos by Ajax Axe of murals from street protests in Khartoum, Sudan by Duha Mohamed and Galal Yousif Goly.

Axe, the Aspen-based sculptor, has long been [involved with the Sudanese street art and freedom movements](#).

The exhibition also incorporates music and poetry on the theme. Aspen-based pianist Amanda Gessler, who is working on her doctorate and studying Beethoven's late sonatas written after the composer had gone deaf, contributed a performance (captured on video playing on loop in the gallery and online). While through a partnership with Aspen Words, which operates out of an office in the

Red Brick, the local writer Kirstin Carlson contributed a new poem. Titled “Beyond Resilience,” a large-format broadsheet of it hangs in the gallery bordered by a collage of Carlson’s making, directly addresses the pandemic and its call for resilience (along with the recent spate of trendy self-help how-tos for such grittiness).

And out on the lawn sits Griffin Loop’s massive steel rendition of a paper airplane. Titled “Launch Intention,” some may remember it from its time on display in Paepcke Park. It will be on the Red Brick lawn through winter.

“I create to explore and communicate with myself and the world,” Loop wrote of the piece’s representation of resilience. “To push. To grow. To question. To embrace. To respect what we as humans can do and pay homage to the infinite powers and beauties beyond.”

This is the first new exhibition to open at the Red Brick since its extended closure due to COVID-19. The nonprofit gallery, during the lockdown period, began launching virtual exhibitions and video content. When it recently reopened on a limited three-days-per-week basis, Roy continued developing the online tools including a virtual viewing room for “Resilience.”

In keeping with public health restrictions, there will be no opening reception for “Resilience,” forgoing a beloved Red Brick tradition. But Roy said the gallery has been getting about a dozen visitors a day since it quietly reopened. In coming days, the online “Resilience” exhibition will include footage of all the artwork and commentary from each of the artists.

“We are experimenting with our digital content,” Roy said.

Commissioner Poschman, in the online exhibition catalog for the show, makes an argument for the profound power of works like the ones in “Resilience” to strengthen spirits in this daunting historical moment.

“I believe in the power of art to effect cultural change,” he wrote. “I also believe that art, at its best, reflects the sentiments of the community in which it is produced. I’d like to see this art exhibit contribute to the awareness of mental health issues in our community and provide us with some of the tools for healing and building resilience. Art works. So, let’s put it to work!”

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