



**DOUBLE DUTY**  
From left: "Veiled Sky," a new work by Tania Dibbs, will be exhibited at the Jewish Community Center; the loungelike gallery space provides an opportunity to contemplate the art.



# VISION QUEST

How did Aspen's new Jewish center also turn into one of the town's hottest arts venues?

By Steve Alldredge

one of Aspen's newest and most vibrant art galleries and cultural centers.

The stately two-story stone building was designed by New York architect Arthur Chabon and includes an 1,100-square-foot space that is now used year-round for religious-themed and secular exhibits and events. Large windows open onto Main Street, and couches and an amply sized fireplace make the ambience more modern living room than art gallery.

The idea originated with Suzanne Horwich, a Glenwood Springs painter and art curator who attended the JCC's opening. When she saw the wide-open space on the first floor, she began imagining the possibility of an arts venue, drawing on her experience creating a gallery at a Jewish center in Omaha, Neb. Within days, she approached Rabbi Mendel Mintz and pitched her vision for the space. Mintz and the JCC board were hearty supporters, and in December 2014 the

In August 2014, the art world's focus turned to Aspen, as the Shigeru Ban-designed Aspen Art Museum opened to much fanfare (and a healthy dose of controversy). A few blocks west on Main Street, another well-endowed building, the \$16 million Jewish Community Center constructed by Chabad Aspen, opened at the same time. And, perhaps unexpectedly, it's become

first art exhibit opened.

"As a curator, I am trying to engage everyone in the community," says Horwich, who now serves as the JCC's director of curatorial affairs. "I see a lot of white faces locally, so I think it's important to have diversity. And I am especially drawn to emerging artists."

One of those artists, part-time Aspen resident Stuart Brafman, is both a supporter of Chabad Aspen and a past exhibitor in the gallery. His series of photographs were presented in a show at the JCC earlier this year. "What I saw was that we really had an [inclusive] venue for events," he says. "With that in mind, we set out to fashion programming last summer that cut across the community."

It's not just art exhibits that are drawing in locals and visitors of all stripes. The entire 19,000-square-foot building can be converted to a nondenominational event space, hosting audiences of up to 300. Last summer, special presentations included talks by Colorado State Rep. Millie Hamner and Rep. Scott Tipton, classical music concerts, and a lecture series hosted by the Aspen Science Center and the Aspen Music Festival and School on the science of music. (Not everything works out; a marijuana-enhanced painting class that Horwich proposed last spring quickly got the kibosh.)

Next up is an exhibit of new and unseen works in oils, mixed media and encaustic—an ancient technique using hot wax—from Basalt-based painter and gallery owner Tania Dibbs. After an opening reception Dec. 18, the exhibit will stay up for one month. "I think the JCC gallery is the coolest place and a wonderful thing for the entire community," says Dibbs. Many arts lovers would agree.

Open 9AM-5PM, Mon.-Fri., 435 W. Main St., 970.544.3770, [jccaspen.com](http://jccaspen.com)

INTERIOR PHOTO BY DAVID MARLOW