

a Colorado shopping complex, Walter emphasized that *Wapiti Trail* would echo the museum and buttes behind.

"Frequently with sculpture, you don't get to design where it's placed," Walter said, but with public works, "you get to dream on a grand scale."

Walter incorporates the surrounding landscape in an unfolding narrative devel-

oped. Meanwhile, the bull pauses at the pinnacle, his antlers cutting an imposing silhouette. A yearling cow follows at a distance, with two calves trailing behind.

From different angles, their roles shift. Head on, the descending female captivates, but from the back, she disappears. Walter explored their staging with 3-inch models,

maquettes of each elk, multiplying their dimensions by 8.2 for a larger-than-life scale. He then constructed monumental armatures of welded steel and styrofoam. A team of volunteers from the local high school in Westminster, Md., where he lives then filled out the frames with clay.

To achieve his signature "slabular" style on such a large

broad, bold strokes, the process was physically exhausting, and required 3,000 pounds of clay.

A biologist by training, Walter began his artistic career by carving birds out of wood.

In 1986, renowned primatologist and anthropologist Jane Goodall visited the College of William and Mary and professors familiar with Walter's work introduced them. She

echoed a distant sage slope.

"It's wonderful to stand here and see the museum in the background," he said, which he applauds for embracing "everything with animal imagery, not just the tiny subset of wildlife art."

A museum goer, on his way out, rolled down his car window.

"Y'all done good!" he yelled.

## Art Lab to sustain contemporary valley originality

**Who:** Art Lab

**What:** Studio-gallery for contemporary valley artists

**When:** Grand opening 5 p.m. on Friday. Regular hours 11 a.m.-8 p.m. daily.

**Where:** Next to Teton Thai off North Cache Dr.

*By Kelsey Dayton*

Travis Walker had a vision. It was of a place where valley artists could showcase their work, even if it didn't fit traditional molds.

That vision has finally been realized in the green-trimmed Art Lab located next to Teton Thai off North Cache Dr.

"The goal isn't just to sell buffalo paintings, it's really to give a creative outlet to some of the really talented artists I've met," Walker said. "It's a place for those whose work is a little too quirky for mainstream galleries."

The Art Lab is open 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week. Its grand opening will coincide with the Fall Arts Festival gallery walk from 5 to 8 p.m. on Friday.

"This is high quality, non-traditional art for sale," said Ben Roth, a sculptor who has several pieces in the gallery. "It's a different genre."

The Art Lab, he said, "is going to let [artists] show and produce art they want to produce versus the art the market demands. We can experiment.



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**Travis Walker, left and Ryan Bailey relax near a Conrad E-12 printing press in the new Art Lab, next to Teton Thai off North Cache.**

It's totally rad, conceptual stuff."

Newly opened, the lab is still a work in progress. But artists have the option of paying rent to show their stuff in the space, unlike galleries that conduct all marketing, sales and shipping and keep a large percentage of sales.

"I think that it [being] artist-run makes a difference," Roth said. "It is artists selling artists' work and representing each other."

Walker studied printmaking in college, but in

the past five years has focused on drawing and painting. As an artist, he was tired of everyone lumping Jackson painters together and thinking only of luscious colors, the Tetons or cowboys and oil paintings. "We are definitely expanding the idea of what the contemporary American West is," Walker said.

The goal is to show work that represents Jackson today.

"There are cowboys here, but usually only at 6:30 p.m. on the Town Square," he said.

Walker is only featuring valley artists, such as Roth, Tom Woodhouse, Samuel Dowd, Jenny Dowd and himself - for now.

"It's pretty easy to look next door and find the best artists," he said.

They represent a variety of mediums from painting and sculpture to photography and mixed media. Soon the lab also will include printmaking. Walker just bought a small printing press. Walker plans on pursuing printmaking that involves working on a plate or woodcut by hand to create a limited edition piece of work.

Walker also plans to work with Roth to create a sculpture garden outside the building in winter. It will be a meditative place people can walk through that celebrates the local landscape, Walker said.

The Art Lab "is broadening the local art scene," Roth said. "Hopefully people will appreciate that."