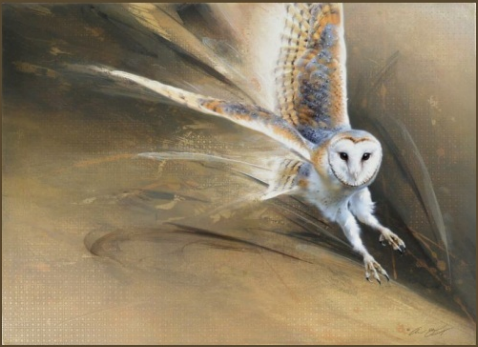
Denman Studios

Showcasing the artwork of Andrew Denman

Winter 2015/16

Issue #26



The very latest by Andrew Denman, available from Astoria Fine Art in Jackson Hole, WY.
"Rush" Barn Owl in Flight, 18 x 24" Acrylic on Cradled Board, 2015

IRONWOOD
GALLERY

Andrew Denman in front of the ASDM's Ironwood Gallery before the opening of *The Modern Wild* (Photo by Guy Combes)

Winter 2015/16 Newsletter:

Greetings!

The last few months have been busy and exciting, and the winter is providing little slow-down, though I am taking time out (and full advantage of the proceeds from my recent showing at Astoria Fine Art) to bring my sad little 1970's bathroom into the 21st Century. It's a welcome distraction with Guy away in England and then Kenya until the end of January. Of course, in between plumbing and tiling, there is much work to be done. One very significant commission is in progress with a few smaller projects waiting in the wings, and of course there are events many months out that demand attention and planning now. I'm also working towards a new body of work for Astoria Fine Art in Wyoming, Creighton Block Gallery in Montana, and currently in talks about a solo show at Diablo Fine Art Gallery in Walnut Creek, CA, in late 2016. And of course there's more travel on the not-too-distant horizon when the *Modern Wild* moves to The Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum in New Jersey in

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Coming Soon

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Denman Wins 1st Place in Richeson 75

February.

As I'm writing this we are experiencing some of the heaviest rain so far this season, and the ground is drinking it up greedily. It's far too early to get complacent about water conservation in drought-stricken California, but the plentiful snowfalls in the Sierra so far this winter are encouraging. I'm hopeful that we'll come out of this wet season above average and get 2016 started off on the right foot. And, with a little luck and a lot of hard work, personal and financial abundance will follow suit. Wishing you all Happy Holidays and a prosperous New Year. As always, I thank you for your continued interest and support.

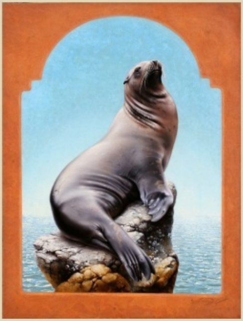
Cheers,

Andrew Denman

New Museum Acquisitions

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

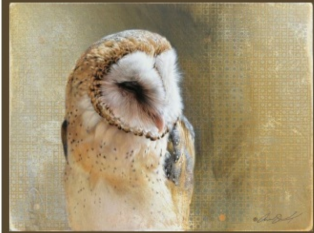
Tucson, AZ



"Madonna of the Rocks" by Andrew Denman, 2012

Andrew Denman is pleased to announce that The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson, AZ, has purchased "Madonna of the Rocks" and "Leftovers" for its permanent Collection, *Vanishing Circles*. The passion project of museum benefactors Michael and Priscilla Baldwin, *Vanishing Circles* is a unique collection of artwork exploring the fragile and threatened flora, fauna, and ecosystems of the greater Sonoran Desert. Initially appearing in the Museum's Ironwood Gallery, this ever-growing collection has since toured to numerous galleries and institutions throughout the US and in Mexico. It is also available as a book, **Vanishing Circles: Portraits of Disappearing Wildlife of the Sonoran Desert Region**, by Linda M. Brewer with a Foreword by renowned conservationist Richard Leakey (also available on Amazon).

"Madonna of the Rocks," also known as "Cortez," features a California Sea Lion set in an

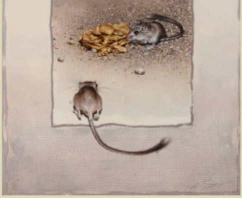


"Minerva"
Barn Owl
9 x 12"
Acrylic on Cradled Board, 2015

Andrew is pleased to announce that "Minerva" has won 1st Place in the Richeson 75 International *Animals, Birds & Wildlife* Competition 2015. Jack Richeson & Co. is a leading manufacturer and supplier of high-quality art materials. As part of their mission to support the visual arts community, they operate the Richeson School of Art & Gallery, which includes the Richeson75 International Art Competitions. These competitions are meant to offer a venue in which established and emerging artists may show their latest, best work to a wide and appreciative audience. The company offers generous awards for their top four prizes, including cash and Richeson merchandise.

Please Note: "Minerva" is available as a limited edition from The Greenwich Workshop. **Click HERE to see this and other limited editions by The Greenwich Workshop**

SOLD



"Leftovers" by Andrew Denman, 2011

architectural niche as though it were a religious object. Fittingly enough, this piece was painted in 2012 in response to a field trip sponsored by the ASDM which resulted in the Dr. David J. Wagner curated show "The Sea of Cortez" in 2013. "Leftovers" describes a memorable encounter with desert pocket mice in 2010. Both pieces were acquired by the museum while on tour as part of *Andrew Denman: The Modern Wild* a national touring museum exhibition of the artist's work also curated and directed by Dr. Wagner. The exhibition will be on view at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum through January 3rd, after which time it will travel to New Jersey where it will be on exhibit at The Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum from February 1st through April 30th, 2016.

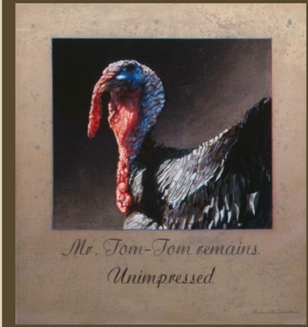
Anatomy of a Commission

The Journey of Creating a Memorial Portrait

I very rarely do pet portraits; in fact I can only think of perhaps five in my entire career. I always begin by making sure the client knows that he or she will not be getting a fuzzy and sentimental animal portrait, but instead a piece of fine art that happens to have his or her pet in it. If you type "pet portrait" into Google images, you'll quickly see that this is not a fine distinction. I took on this project both because I love whippets (Guy and I have a whippet mix, our beloved Enzi), and because I loved the story behind the piece.

The commissioners wanted me to work from some photos a friend of theirs had taken of their deceased whippet, Phoebe. It's worth pointing out that posthumous portraits are an exception to my "I only work from my own references" rule, since there is no other option, other than to decline the project. It does create problems, however; given the lack of personal experience with the subject, such pieces require a lot more research and a more careful than usual consultation with the client. The first thing I asked for was a signed release from the photographer authorizing me to use his image as a basis for the painting. Sadly, obtaining such a release was impossible because he too had passed away (I was able to retain permission from his widow). Apparently this friend was a budding photographer who also suffered from terrible Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from his time in combat. He was advised that spending time outdoors was an important part of his therapy, so every week he accompanied his friends when they took their dogs out for a hike. The owners would mind their dogs as they frolicked and hunted after rabbits

at The Arizona- Sonora Desert Museum



"Mr. Tom-Tom Remains Unimpressed"
Turkey Tom
17 x 15.5"
Acrylic on Cradled Board, 2008

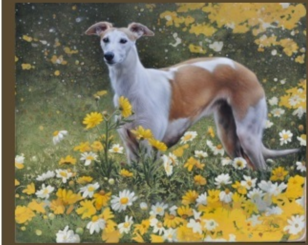
This piece was sold in conjunction with the tour of *Andrew Denman: The Modern Wild.*

Call The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum today to inquire about artwork by Andrew Denman available now through *The Modern Wild*:

(520) 883-3024

Click the images above for more information

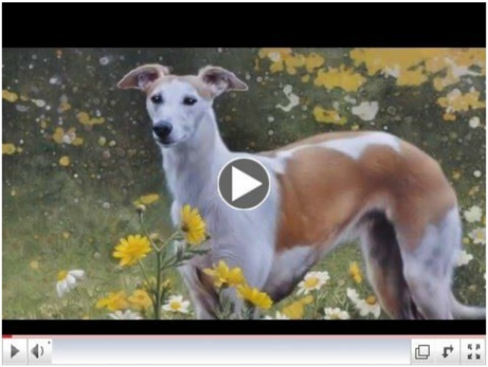
Hot Off the Easel



while their friend would take his mind off his troubles through the simple act of taking pictures.

The idea that I was memorializing not only a treasured family pet, but a man who, like many before him, sought solace from pain and grief in nature, made this painting especially satisfying to complete. At the time of this writing, the clients have yet to see the painting in person, but their reaction upon seeing just a photograph in an e-mail convinces me that I have done good by both man and beast.

Please enjoy the video below, which shows a time lapse view of the creation of the painting from start to finish in under two minutes.



Adventures in Art

The Divine Desert

From California to Arizona and Back

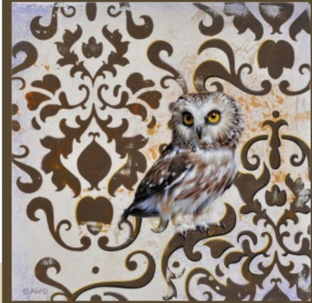
After the run of *The Modern Wild* at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum, Guy and I acted as shipping agents to transport the work to Tucson. The decision made good sense

"Phoebe"
Whippet Portrait
14 x 17"
Acrylic on Board, 2015

This piece was specially commissioned for a couple in San Diego as a portrait of their dear departed pet, Phoebe. Please read the full story to the left.

Click the images above for more information

Available
at Astoria Fine Art



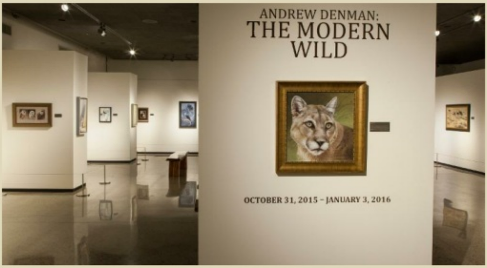
"Modern Camouflage IV" (detail)
Screech Owls
10 x 10"
Acrylic on Cradled Board, 2015

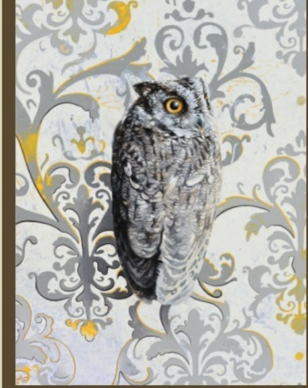
The stunning view from our host's garden (Photo by Guy Combes).

because we needed to get to Tucson anyway, both for my opening there and to teach workshops at the Baldwin Educational Center in conjunction with the premier (and besides, who would take better care of my own inventory than me?). After crating up the work and loading it into a rented moving truck, we took two days to drive from Walnut Creek, CA to Tucson, AZ, where the work was received directly into the museum, after which Guy and I met up with our hosts, Glenn and Martha Thompson. I first met them during the *Sea of Cortez* exhibition in 2011, and Guy and I have continued to see them at subsequent SKB workshops in Wyoming ever since. They were wonderful hosts, both in sharing their beautiful home, introducing us to their circle of terrific friends, and spoiling us with some fantastic meals, including Martha's home-made Carne Asada and hand-crafted pizzas at friends' Shannon and Chris's place.

Glenn and Martha live in Tucson at the edge of the Saguaro National Forest, and the beauty of the landscape stole our hearts. Driving from their home to the museum and back nearly every day was an absolute joy, especially in the early morning or late afternoon when the sunlight paints the rocks a luminous orange and pink and the curiously anthropomorphic shapes of the noble cacti stand out in dark silhouette. We were so taken with the area we even started scoping out real estate, which was little trouble since two of the Thompson's closest friends are real estate agents.

My three-day workshop went incredibly well. I had a very good-sized group of ten enthusiastic and talented people, and the time flew by in a wink. Often in a workshop setting there is at least one person who is problematic, or at least demands too much of my time to the detriment of other students; not so this time! Everyone worked rather seamlessly, both with me and each other. Additionally, the Arizona-Sonora Desert museum staff were kind enough to arrange a series of live animal visitors to our classroom ranging from a Military Macaw to a Gila Monster, and even an Arizona Blonde Tarantula.





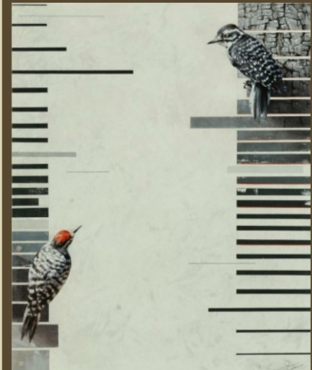
"Modern CamouflageII" (detail)
Screech Owls
20 x 30"
Acrylic on Cradled Board, 2015

Click HERE to see all available pieces at Astoria Fine Art or call the gallery today:

(307) 733-4016

Click the images above for more information

Available
at Creighton Block Gallery



A clean and beautiful installation in the Ironwood Gallery (Photo by Robert Renfrow).

The afternoon before the official opening of *The Modern Wild*, the museum threw a wonderful invitation only VIP Preview. The event began with each of us giving a lecture in the very impressive Baldwin Theatre, then walking over to the Ironwood Gallery with the crowd to give them their first look at the show. The museum did a marvelous job hanging the show, and Art Institute Director Holly Swangstu was a joy to work with. It's always nice to meet someone in a business capacity and find that they have become a friend, even more so when you discover that that friend is talented, efficient and reliable to work with.

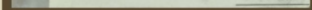
Denman lecturing in the Baldwin Theatre (Photo by Ray Goodwin).

Visitors to the preview enjoy the show (Photo by Ray Goodwin).

In between socializing, public events, and work, we had very little down time in Tucson, but we did end up with one free day to spend enjoying the wonderful observational and photographic opportunities the museum has to offer. We had a particularly good time photographing raptors during the "free flights" the museum holds every morning and afternoon, and hanging out with a particularly photogenic mountain lion. Holly was kind enough to organize a very special back stage experience for me with General Curator Stephane Poulin, who showed me around the reptile and amphibian collections. We spent an extra amount of time with the Chuckwallas, a beautiful lizard I've always been very interested in. I was elated when he offered for me to hold one. It was both an emotional experience I will treasure and a very educational look at what goes on behind the closed doors of a museum like the ASDM, which is fully engaged in a range of conservation efforts.

A busy opening night reception enjoyed by all (Photo by Ray Goodwin).

Andrew gets acquainted with a San Esteban Chuckwalla (Photo by Holly Swangstu).



"The Bar Code"
Nuttals' Woodpeckers
20 x 16"
Acrylic on Cradled Board, 2015

Click HERE to see all available pieces
at Creighton Block or call the gallery today:

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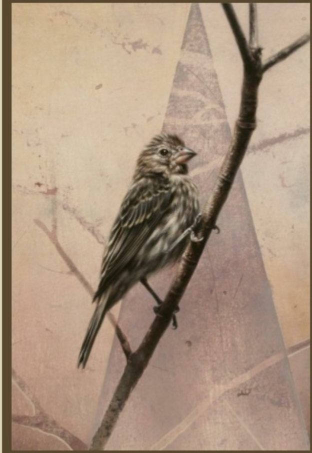
Available
at Diablo Fine Art Gallery



"Process of Elimination" (detail)
House Finches
23.75 x 14"
Acrylic on Cradled Board

Click HERE to see all available pieces
at Diablo Fine Art Gallery or call the gallery in
Canada toll free today:

From left to right: ASDM Executive Director Craig Ivanyi, Museum Benefactors Michael & Priscilla Baldwin, Guy Combes, Andrew Denman, & ASDM Art Institute Director Holly Swangstu.

Our last night in Tucson, we said goodbye to new friends at a party in our honor at Holly's stunning home, which everyone agreed looked like something out of a James Bond movie. My contribution was a signature cocktail which was quickly dubed a "Modern Wild." When it was finally time to go, we bid farewell to the divine desert landscape and drove back to the good old Bay Area, stopping along the way in San Diego and Palm Springs where we were able to meet up briefly with a few friends. I'm glad to find myself home again, but the stark beauty of the desert still beckons. Fortunately, Guy and I made very positive impressions at the ASDM, and it looks like there may well be some exciting opportunities for collaboration in the near future.

-Andrew Denman, December 2015

From the Artist's Desk

The Value of Art

A recent Facebook post by my partner Guy, also a well-regarded wildlife painter, used the phrase "investing in a piece of art," and it caused an unusually long thread of comments, most of which had nothing to do with the general intent of the post, but which were instead hung up on this one phrase. What exactly does it mean to invest in art? The initial reply that sparked some controversy clearly understood Guy's comments to be about monetary value, but that is not what he meant, nor what most artists mean when they talk about investing in art.

Of course, art does have monetary value, and that shouldn't be overlooked. A documentary from a few years back explored the ten most expensive paintings in the world and attempted to understand why each piece had sold for such astronomical amounts. The answer was universally the same; a combination of provenance and timing. Everyone understands that the monetary value of a painting is linked to how famous or sought after the artist may be, but there is also the story behind the

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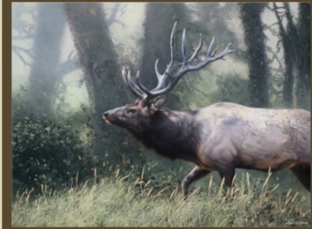
Framing & Gallery



"In the Glen"

Bull Elk

22 x 29"

Acrylic on Cradled Board

Click HERE to see all available pieces at Picture This! Framing & Gallery or call the gallery in Canada toll free today:

(800) 528-4278

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piece. A painting previously owned by historically important persons or of particular significance in an artist's creative evolution or personal life may well garner a higher price. The story is everything; just think of the popular mythology and scholarly speculation surrounding The Mona Lisa, probably the most dramatically over-rated painting in human history. As for timing, one should never downplay the role of the immediate market. It's well known to artists and auction houses that a painting by a well-known artist that would ordinarily sell for one hundred thousand dollars could sell for five hundred thousand if there are two collectors at the auction absolutely determined to take it home. I myself once had a fairly poor showing at a gallery when my exhibition happened to open in the fall of 2008, two days after the economic bomb dropped. People were hardly thinking about buying art when they were worrying if their bank was going to collapse. Timing and circumstances having nothing to do with the quality of the art can play a huge role in whether or not an artwork sells at all and for how much. One of my gallery representatives acquired a beautiful Wilhelm Kuhnert painting for well below its estimated value at auction; he decided to price the piece low, make a small profit, and pass the value on to his loyal customers. The painting languished unsold for months until the gallerist raised the price to high market value, at which point it sold immediately. His conclusion was that the low price made people think the painting wasn't any good, because a Kuhnert piece ought to be expensive. All of this illustrates that the actual dollar value of an artwork is fickle, subjective, and maddeningly nebulous.

Young artists often ask me how I go about pricing my work, and I'm afraid I'm not much help to them. I don't envy young artists entering the market at a professional level and struggling to price their work without the benefit of a long history of sales behind them. They have few choices but to observe what prices comparable contemporaries are fetching and use that as a basis, keeping in mind that a new artist can seldom charge as much for his work as an established painter with an existing market of buyers. I have one friend who approaches the question in a very business-like way, counseling artists to estimate the number of paintings they can complete and sell in a month and divide that number into their monthly living expenses to come up with a per unit price; but this requires a beginning artist to have data they may simply not have, and the resulting figure may or may not be supported by the marketplace anyway. I was fortunate to have started selling my work when I was twelve years old for just a few dollars. I had my first show at a local library at age fifteen and sold pieces for around sixty to three-hundred dollars. I began showing at a local gallery at age sixteen and saw my prices rise steadily with demand (and the quality of my work) through four solo exhibitions over eight years. The point is that it was very incremental, with previous sell-out shows justifying the gradual raising of prices of new work.

A few years ago, I was profiled in Western Art Collector, and they asked me to tell them the average price of a small, medium, and large painting at three different intervals over the past ten years to give their readers an idea of the investment value of my work over time. I was fortunate to have those records and very pleased to see that my work had increased far more in value than I'd thought. Just a few months ago I made similar calculations and found that from 1996 (when I began having my first serious gallery shows) to present my prices have risen eight hundred percent! But of course, the dollar value of an older piece is only proven when it is sold at that price on the secondary market. I currently have no auction record because, thus far, people who've bought my paintings largely seem to have kept them, and I only know of one piece sold on the secondary market, which was during my Pacific Wildlife days. That piece did sell at my "going rate" but only a couple of years had elapsed since the original sale, so the new sale price and the old one differed by only twenty or thirty percent if memory serves. I am confident that my work has investment value, but I'm even more confident that my work is of a level of quality and beauty that makes it worthy of being cherished, and that's far more important to me, and hopefully to collectors too.

I like to tell people that "investment value" is the worst reason to buy a piece of art. Art is a heart purchase, not a head purchase. Having said that, it's a nice side benefit to feel like what you've just purchased will become a valuable family heirloom. When I myself am considering an art purchase, it's important to me that the piece I'm buying is part of a body of work that I admire, a body of work that demonstrates a talent and dedication to craft beyond simply one good piece. This is how I reassure myself that I'm investing in a career that has promise.

This is precisely the point that Guy was making in his Facebook post. When you buy a piece of art, the most important investment you're making is not in the individual object purchased, it is in the artist himself. It's all well and good to say that things like art are not about money, but the joy of creating, and to a certain extent that's true. But when you buy something from an artist, you are having a very considerable practical impact on that artist's life. That infusion of cash will enable the artist to paint his next painting. My dear friend, sculptor Simon Gudgeon, once said (forgive my paraphrasing) that when someone buys one of his sculptures, he thanks them for making the next sculpture possible. We're all aware that at one time, most artists either made no money during their lifetime, or they had a patron. I don't know a single artist alive today who doesn't wish for a true patron, someone who furnishes the artist with a home, a studio, and living expenses. All that the patron demands in return is "first dibs" on new work and a certain number of pieces each year in exchange for the room and board. There are countless examples of artists throughout history whose legacies were made possible only by a wealthy patron. Looking back to antiquity, nearly all of what we consider ancient art, from Egyptian Hieroglyphs to Greek Statuary were created by artists at the expense of a governmental or religious order, effectively by a patron. I feel very fortunate to have a few collectors who have bought enough of my work to really qualify as patrons, or the modern equivalent anyway, but really every single person who has ever bought a painting from me, big or small, one or many, has made it possible for me to keep doing what I do. This is why few things bring me more joy than those rare occasions when I buy an artwork from a fellow artist, because I know what it means to him, and it means a lot more than just dollars and cents.

Every so often I'm asked if it's hard for me to part with a painting when I sell it; the answer is an emphatic no. My interest in my own paintings is in painting them, not hanging them on a wall. My paintings are, for lack of a better term, my brain children, and nothing gives me more satisfaction that to see them off into the world and into a new home. The fact that someone is willing to part with his or her hard-earned money in exchange for something I created out of nothing more than colored goo on a substrate, continues to amaze and humble me. The idea that that painting will become a cherished part of someone else's daily life is a tremendous validation of my life's work and an important motivation in keeping me going. I am grateful that it continues to happen, because without it, I would ultimately have to find something else to do to earn a living, and I'm not entirely sure I'm fit to do anything else. So please, this holiday season and throughout the coming year, consider making a purchase of original art to beautify your life. Be it one of mine or another artist's, you should feel warm inside knowing that you have invested, not in another of a long line of shiny toys, but in a real person whose life and career depend on you.

-Andrew Denman, December 2015

Coming Soon :

The Modern Wild Tour: February 1-April 30, 2016

Look for Andrew Denman's mid-career retrospective touring show as it makes its way to its final venue, The Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum in Oradell, NJ. Watch for future updates in coming issues of the AndrewDenman.com E-Newsletter and Facebook.

Click HERE for Updates & More Information on *The Modern Wild* Coast to Coast Tour

Masterpieces in Miniature: Spring 2016

Look for new work by Andrew Denman in *Picture This!* Gallery's annual miniature show and sale in Alberta, Canada. This show is a great opportunity to buy a small and affordable gem by your favorite artist and to support WellSpring Edmonton, which provides art supplies to kids battling cancer.

Astoria's Ten Year Anniversary: Summer 2016

This summer Astoria Fine Art in historic Jackson Hole will celebrate ten years of business with a art show you won't want to miss. A full color catalogue is in the works, and of course, new major works by Andrew Denman will be included. Join Astoria's mailing list to be among the first to hear when this show is scheduled to open.

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Andrew Denman

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