



### **Amber Doe, Resident Artist**

Founded in 2015 by Warren and Joan Malkerson and MoMAZoZo (Paula Wilson and Mike Lagg), Carrizozo AIR (Artists in Residence) program invites artists from across the country to come to Carrizozo to expand and test their talents in a unique and distinct environment. Amber Doe, a multimedia artist from Arizona, agreed to discuss her art and experience during her recent residency.

Originally from Philadelphia, PA, Ms. Doe moved to Tucson to join her mother, who she describes as “the original desert dweller.”

“It was an adjustment because it wasn’t what I anticipated at first. One of the things I had to transition from is when you come from the east coast, I think most things are people- and culture-centered, and I didn’t know what to do at first, because it is not the same feeling in a desert setting,” Doe explained.

Much of the difference lies in going from an environment that forces one to look vertically along lines of buildings up into a narrow chasm to the sky versus being able to stare out on a vast, horizontal plane.

According to Doe, the desert confronts one to physically follow along infinite sight lines outward, as well as inwardly considering what is possible.

The sense of connectedness is compounded in a small town, where people can be friendly to the point of being disconcerting, especially to someone who is used to living within a well-established, city-acquired, self-containing shell.

“Like, ‘Maybe they said hi to be nice, maybe they don’t want to

hit me over the head,’” laughed Doe. “The shell is for safety and, especially since it wasn’t initially my choice to come to the desert... you have built up this kind of protection that serves you well in urban environments. The process of breaking those devices down when you are in a new place can be challenging. It feels like you have to learn new tools and do new things to chip away at whatever wall that served you well, but now does not serve you so well.”

As Doe was experiencing the differences of large city versus small town living, she was also discerning finer distinctions of different desert surroundings, especially as repositories for potential materials to be used in her work.

“The Sonoran is different from Chihuahuan,” said Doe. “We have creosote, ocotillo, saguaro, and all of these other plants that I think of more readily... I was asked to do a commission for somebody and they have a very natural sense to them, so I started researching rope. (Cotton rope is traditionally what I work with the most.) I was thinking of this person, and I fell into researching the yucca plant, and I found it was synonymous with New Mexico. I did all of this research on this plant, and then I find myself here days later. I couldn’t have predicted that material choice would have come to me in that way: I’m studying this plant, thinking how do I get its fibers, who was weaving it and I found myself here and ‘Boom,’ I was surrounded by it.”

Research plays an important role in Doe’s work. It serves to unveil hidden histories, particularly unacknowledged stories of Black women and labor.

“I traditionally use materials as metaphor,” Doe further explained. “I started working with cotton because my uncle did my family tree and found out that we descended from a population of slaves that lived off of the coast of South Carolina. The main crops grown there were indigo and cotton, but my ancestors were also considered a cash crop. I did a model of Jefferson’s Monticello and rebuilt it in cotton and tobacco as

a [manifestation of that] concept. So, it is personal. My labor becomes also part of that mythology.”

One of the works Doe worked on while in Carrizozo was a woven piece incorporating bits and pieces found in the desert with the few things she brought here from Tucson. Again, she drew on her personal history of her father, who is from West Africa. Some artists there are making pointed visual statements by using materials that are pervasive, and some argue, invasive: excessive t-shirts and disposable materials from the west.

“I was thinking: ‘Why couldn’t I do that myself?’” Doe questioned. “Why couldn’t I say there is so much that is left over, wasted or nobody wants anymore. What would it look like if I used materials in a way like that? And speak to that kind of cultural heritage that I do have because my father is from West Africa, and think about materials in a different way.”

The combination of personal history spoken through voices often suppressed and materials so readily discarded in a place where nature plays such an important role in everyday life can be seen in Doe’s current piece. What can also be seen is the newly found confidence of an artist who took the risk of coming to an unfamiliar place and embraced the uncomfortable.

“It started to remind me of the earth’s crust,” Doe said, pointing to the piece stretched up on the wall behind her. “It was specific to even with all of these potentially natural/synthetic materials, like imagining it was like a core and just a crust, and that I’m building on top of something. I didn’t expect to be so free and open with different textures, colors, all the stuff I’m usually very streamlined in terms of what it is going to look like, but I allowed it to sort of go in a crazier direction than I traditionally would.”

Unfortunately, Amber Doe’s visit was cut short the day of her opening when her mother, who came to visit, became ill, but her work can be seen on her website <https://amberdoestudio.com>.

## Growing Carrizozo

by Cathie R. Eisen

I have been testing ideas regarding Branding Carrizozo, but I realize I am somewhat off track. There is already a Comprehensive Plan and a Redevelopment Plan to do all of that.

Yes, those documents are the groundwork for everything we do going forward, but we also need to look at how that plays out. The same questions remain as to how we want to develop our assets, but we are also growing.

In attending the City Council Meetings I am greeted with new faces at each and every meeting. I see many people who invested in the Valle Del Sol properties who are now coming to roost as well as an influx into town from the cities far and wide.

Carrizozo has become a destination for a new wave of people, as it always has been to some degree. I don't know all the demographics for this growth but they are bringing new life and opportunity to our town.

My question is, "What direction will these new folks lead us to and how are we going to accommodate that?"

Change is imminent but, in the past, the townspeople have been so resistant to anything new that much of it failed. In spite of the influx of new residents I have watched the town dwindle instead of prosper.

There was a lively artist community some twenty years ago, two grocery stores, a hardware store, and several other businesses that are no longer there. The group of people who had routine potlucks and contributed to a lively 'Creative Connection' have either died or moved away, with a few notable exceptions. Still, there is a sense of community that barely exists compared to those days and it is something we all require to enrich our lives.

I enjoy my solitude as much as the next person, but there can be more than enough of that also. At the same time I see some rich clusters of folks who come together

on occasion. We have a resilient artist community and some powerful contributors to the life and breath of our historic Twelfth Street. We have a strong group of folks who participate in the Chamber of Commerce. We have a lively bunch who attends the City Council meetings. We also have several other folks who have invested their time and money into the growth of our town and into establishing new businesses who have a grand vision of what the future of Carrizozo may look like.

If Carrizozo is going to grow and prosper, I think we need to bring all of these folks together in order to grow our community in a resilient fashion. We need to support each other, to talk to each other, and to collaborate our efforts so that we will all find the ultimate health and happiness we are looking for.

People don't just move into a community without goals and reasons for being there. Money doesn't buy happiness, even if it does make it easier to seek it out. We are here because we see opportunities but also because there is a way of life that appeals to us. The slower pace, the wide open spaces, the year round sunshine all count into that, but we need each other also.

Nothing happens by itself, it happens when people initiate new and better ideas, when they put time and effort into making things happen, when they have a vision and a desire to see that through to build something new and better than what they started with. We have new faces, new streets and sidewalks, and new opportunities all around us. Carrizozo is growing, Valle Del Sol is growing and things are changing each and every day.

It is my hope that our new residents and existing ones will gather around the table, sink in some roots and grow things together. If they don't, the tumbleweeds will grow back where they have always been and when the wind blows, which it always will, all of the new opportunities

will simply roll away again.

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### January 10, 2023 Town Council Meeting

Planning and Zoning application by Leticia Villanueva for a storage building to be placed on property: Variance not requested, so approved.

Lodgers Tax request for \$2,000 by Carrizozo Music for advertising: approved.

Job description and hourly rate for Town of Carrizozo Administrative Assistant: approved.

Adoption of Open Meetings

Resolution: approved.

Approval of Monthly Expenditures: approved.

### January 17, 2023 Regular Board Meeting of the Carrizozo Board of Education

Action Items:

Board Re-organization: Approved keeping current officers

Demolition of Old High School: Approved after emotional discussion

Substitution Pay increase to \$115 a day: Approved

Recognitions will be covered in next edition

### January 19 CWI Regular Monthly Meeting

Discussion after presentation concerning New Horizons by

Dr. Clara Farah and possible involvement of New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department: Building's condition discussed since owned by county, Dr. Farah and Rose Reems will contact county manager.

Approved beginning discussion with Superintendent Patterson regarding old gym.

Approved purchase of swing set seats for Fred Chavez Park.

Rejected donation to Carrizozo Music since request is not covered by mission statement but individual donations were encouraged.

Approved taking over putting out American flags on holidays from Rotary Club.

Approved commissioning Rick Geary for thank you notes.