

# Artistically blonde

26-year-old opens Gallery Mar this weekend

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- At 26, Maren Bargreen is one of the youngest business owners on Main Street. Never mind that her business is a fine art gallery. The affable blonde is something of a matchmaker. She says she opened Gallery MAR to help emerging artists and novice collectors find, what else, but each other. "The most important thing is to buy what you love," she explained. "Art is an investment in yourself."

Bargreen recalled a recent meeting with a young couple from Arkansas. "They had never thought about buying a piece of original art," she said, "but something in this one particular piece touched them."

The interaction ended happily ever after. The couple bought the painting. One possible conclusion: Love may not last forever, but art does. "Everything about the moment was golden," Bargreen said. "Art is something you can pass on from generation to generation."

Gallery MAR celebrates its grand opening Friday, July 4, and Saturday, July 5, with free artist demonstrations. [This weekend] the thousand-square-foot gallery on 580 Main Street features artists Brad Stroman and Fran Nicholson.

Bargreen may be blonde, she says, but she's the brain of the operation. She also has plenty of experience. She has worked as the director of Meyer Gallery and studied art at Pepperdine University in [Malibu] Beach, Calif. Her mom, Melinda Bargreen is the music critic for the Seattle Times and helped expose Maren to the art world at an early age.

Bargreen says she's paying it forward with education classes at the gallery. "I want art to be a lot more approachable," she said. "You don't have to feel like it's a scary white box you're walking into."

The effort to educate extends beyond the shop doors of Gallery Mar, Bargreen said. The English major started a blog at gallerymar.com where she discusses local events and happens in the art community. "I'm always looking for something new," she said. "The Baby Boomers' kids are in their 20s, 30s, 40s. We need a new gallery for a new generation."

As for being young, Bargreen says there's something to be said for naiveté. "Being young enough and just dumb enough to start my own gallery, the sky's the limit," she said. "You're talking to a woman who opened a gallery in a recession."

She added that her passion, know-how and energy would be an asset to starting a business on Main Street. But she couldn't do it alone. "The whole community has been so supportive and amazing," she said. "The timing was just right."

### **In her own words**

Maren Bargreen answered a few of Scene's questions via email in this Q&A.

SCENE:

What role do art galleries play in promoting the arts in Park City? Do galleries have the responsibility to be community centers or is it enough to simply run a good business and sell art?

BARGREEN:

Gallery MAR actively seeks ways to positively impact the community and promote our fantastic Utah arts groups. We freely offer our space to non-profit groups for events and receptions, and this summer we will host a benefit for Kathy Lofft, a democratic candidate for House Seat 53. With artist demonstrations and art talks in the gallery throughout the year, Parkites will see Gallery MAR as an outlet for their arts endeavors. Have an outreach idea? Give me a call.

SCENE:

Is it intimidating to be a relatively young gallery owner?

BARGREEN:

At this point in my life, I have nothing and everything to lose. I have the rest of my life to build Gallery MAR, promote my artists, and impact my community. I am fortunate to have incredible mentors and support. There are days when I'm not sure where the day will take me, but I love how this business is never predictable. I just bought a 5-foot by 8-foot trailer for delivering artwork. Has anyone in the U.S. ever towed a rig behind their TT convertible? Not that I can find. Did I figure it out, get it hitched up, and drag the thing up from Layton? You bet.

SCENE:

Considering your mom's background as something of a culture vulture in Seattle, why do you think it's important for kids to be exposed to the arts at a young age?

BARGREEN:

Time and time again studies have proven that exposure to music and the arts at a young age is beneficial to developmental growth. As well, children who are involved in the arts have a higher level of intelligence. Why not give your kids that kind of advantage?

SCENE:

You said you were the only gallery in town that sold art supplies in shop. Do you find more art collectors picking up the brush themselves?

BARGREEN:

Nearly everyone has looked at a painting (typically of the modern strain) and said, "Hell, I could paint that!" Most likely, you couldn't, and more importantly, you didn't. But that doesn't mean that collectors should shy away from practicing painting themselves. I felt that locals and visitors needed a place to buy a set which included everything to get started. This is a great way to learn more about the artist's process, and I think collectors will in turn learn to appreciate the talent of fine artists.

SCENE:

What kind of art supplies do you provide?

BARGREEN:

Oil and acrylic starter kits, canvas boards and pads, brushes, drawing utensils, and watercolor sets. Something you want to see here? Let me know and I'll supply it.

SCENE:

Is there anything we neglected to ask that you'd like to add?

BARGREEN:

We are all about educating collectors and I want guests in the gallery to feel free to ask questions about the process and thought behind our pieces. I love to talk about my artists. The emerging and mid-career artists in Gallery MAR offer works that are a sensational value- many pieces are under \$1000.

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