



Patrick Ghidossi The Aspen Times

Olivia Daane Reische stands in her gallery LivAspenArt on the Cooper Avenue Mall. The gallery features emerging, contemporary artists who are also local to Aspen.

The art of balancing art & business

Stewart Oksenhorn
The Aspen Times

For some five years, Olivia Daane Reische dabbled in being a businesswoman. She did some marketing work, kept a client list, threw events, acted like a salesperson.

"But I did it wearing a painting apron," she said.

For those five years, Reische split her time and focus between running the working studio/gallery, LivAspenArt, at Aspen Highlands Village, and doing her own painting. The two meshed well: Highlands was generally quiet enough to provide uninterrupted creative time, while having other artists to represent and support fed Reische's entrepreneurial nature and her desire to build an artist community. The fact that LivAspenArt was a working studio — with not only Reische, but a handful of other local artists setting up shop in the space — made it OK for Reische to keep the apron on while she interacted with customers.

On an afternoon last week in downtown Aspen, Reische was in serious business attire — a black-and-white print dress. The apron was nowhere in sight. This past

'Don't call me when I'm painting. That's really sacred.'

Olivia Daane Reische

February, Reische opened a branch of LivAspenArt on the Cooper Avenue mall that doesn't so much extend the Highlands concept as expand Reische herself. The new space is a pure gallery, with set operating hours and not a brush nor easel laying around. There was paint — but only in the finished pieces of art, cohesively arranged on the walls. The new operation makes Reische a full-fledged gallery owner.

"This is the first job I've had since being a concierge at the St. Regis," the outgoing, talkative 40-year-old said. "I come in at a specific time, I work more hours than I can even describe. And I'm not painting while I'm doing that."

Which should not be construed to

mean that she has given up painting. The LivAspenArt at Highlands is still in business, only now it acts partly as a refuge, where Reische can don the apron, ignore the outside world, and paint — at least, when the demands of the downtown gallery permit.

"I'm not getting back there to paint as much as I like. And when I do, it's heaven," she said. While Reische doesn't regularly show her own work at the Aspen gallery, it became apparent that she is still engaged in her own art. As we sat down to talk, a call came from the Elliott Yeary Gallery, just a block away, on the Hyman Avenue mall. Another of Reische's butterfly paintings had sold from the recent exhibition she had at the neighboring gallery. This

weekend, Corzo tequila is launching a limited-edition bottle featuring another of her butterflies; a larger run of the bottles is being discussed. (Butterflies, the symbol of metamorphosis, are Reische's signature image.)

Any doubt that Reische still operates, at least part of the time, in right-brain mode was dispelled when she shifted suddenly from talking about building a staff and creating events at the gallery to expounding on the way an artist functions. "I think artists are seekers. They're seeking a reason for being here, a purpose," she said. "We all do that, and the artists are the lucky ones who get to this medium, do something visible, tangible, to say, 'I'm here. I'm here on this planet, and here's what's going on globally and locally, and where am I in that?'"

Reische grew up in Tennessee with the influences of art — she painted and sang side-by-side with her mother, and took piano lessons at the Blair School of Music in Nashville — and business — her father taught economics at Vanderbilt and was on the board of governors of the Federal Reserve. When she attended Vanderbilt,