

# ROOM TO GROW

*Artist Tania Dibbs creates the live/work space of her creative dreams in historic downtown Basalt.*

STORY BY ALI MARGO

Tania Dibbs in the Basalt gallery and studio (below) that also happens to be her home

From the outside, Tania Dibbs's new studio looks relatively nondescript: a simple, barn-like metal structure with a short gravel driveway and a garage door. Tucked beneath a hillside in the Elk Run neighborhood of Basalt, it's particularly modest in comparison with some of the homes surrounding it.

That impression transforms radically when you walk through the door. Inside, a dramatically lit, 4,500-square-foot hall—with 25-foot ceilings, white walls, decorative cement floors, and multiple skylights—showcases a collection of bold, colorful, and ethereal paintings and sculptures. It's masterfully minimalist and modern like most gallery and exhibition spaces, but it's also where Dibbs lives. Built from the ground up over 18 months, the open-plan live/work space integrates an immaculate studio, a large gallery, and a residence with few walls separating the kitchen, the bedroom, and the lofted mezzanine office.

And that's exactly the way she intended it. "I always wanted to have a big, beautiful space to be able to live with my art: to be with it, to wake up with it, to spend time with it, to see how it looks in different light and how it stands up over time," Dibbs says. "You don't learn from your work if you produce it and it just disappears."

A prolific artist, Dibbs considers herself "a maker in general" who is not afraid to try new things. Best known as a painter (her website

lists well-known moguls, Hollywood celebs, and rock stars as collectors), she also works in sculpture, pottery, and jewelry design, using a wide variety of materials and media to explore, as she puts it, social commentary with mediated landscape overlays that reflect on how humans impact the earth.

Dibbs has lived for almost 30 years in historic downtown Basalt, where her previous space functioned as both gallery and working studio—something she has always prioritized. "When you see an artist's work in a gallery, you're getting a curated selection of work that goes together," Dibbs explains. "But if you come into an artist's studio, you see the whole process. It's a much broader experience."

Now that she lives together with her studio and gallery, Dibbs has added the opportunity to gain perspective on works in progress as she drinks her morning coffee, when she's in the shower, or while inline skating around the open space. "If I was in my old space, the work would be crowded and in stacks," she says. "Even the time it takes to drive to and from the studio, so much is lost. It's amazing to be able to live with it."

## TANIA DIBBS STUDIO & GALLERY

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The benefits manifested themselves recently when she was creating *Dandelion Field*. Dibbs had dripped the paint in lieu of using a brush and had flipped the painting upside down after adding more yellow to let it drip, then took a lunch break. When she returned to her work, the yellow had dripped a lot farther than she had intended, but she loved it so much that she left the finished product flipped.

Another piece she recently completed, *Wildflowers*, a canvas measuring five-by-eight feet, captures the optimism and essence of the new space. "The expansiveness, vibrancy, and excitement really come through," Dibbs says. "It's all about new growth."



PHOTOS BY ROSS KRIBBS