

WHAT INSPIRES ME



Graphic Novels I learned how to draw from copying comic books when I was younger, and that eventually evolved into painting. My work is still pretty graphic. Now, I'll look at graphic novels and not necessarily pay attention to what's going on in the story. I get into the way artists create space and how they put a picture together. There are a couple that I read, though, like the *Sin City* series.



TRAVIS WALKER

Artist and founder of Teton Artlab

By Dina Mishev · Portrait by David Agnello

PAINTER TRAVIS WALKER FIRST SAW the Tetons in a mall in Delaware when he was a teenager. Walker, forty, worked at the mall, where a poster shop had reproductions of Ansel Adams' photographs of the West. "The poster store was my favorite in the mall," Walker says. Walker and his wife, Lisa—a graphic designer whose line of apparel is sold at Persephone, Workshop, and Habits—moved to the valley in 2002. "We moved here for her job," he says. "I don't do the Jackson stuff like ski or bike." Walker spends his time outside painting. "It never occurred to me to paint outside all the time until I moved to Jackson," he says. "I tried it a couple of times as a student and liked it, but never got hooked until moving here."

In 2007, Walker founded Teton Artlab, which supports artists by providing affordable studio space, housing, stipends, and creative opportunities beyond the studio. In 2012, Altamira Fine Art began representing Walker. "I'd never been in a gallery before," Walker says. His show at the gallery, *Out There*, hangs from September 20 through October 4. Here, Walker shares some of the things that ignite his creativity and inspire his work. ▲



Vintage Signage in Downtown The new sign for the restaurant **Teton Tiger** is probably one of the best I've ever seen. It's not vintage, but it looks old. Every business should have to make their signs like that. I did a residency in Vermont with a guy who made these signs, but since he was getting fewer and fewer commissions, he turned it into art and was making these crazy sculptures with the materials you'd make a sign out of. I look at old photos of Jackson's downtown and see how the signs have changed for the worse. The Cowboy Bar sign is the only one left. I hope it will survive.

Tourists I live downtown and see lots of buses. I like watching tourists. I'll wander out of my studio and take photos. I feel like [Jackson Hole-based nature photographer] Tom Mangelsen stalking these people. I've been doing **paintings with tourists as subjects** since I moved here. They take a lot more time for me than a painting of the Teton Theatre does, though. I've done an Amish family in front of Old Faithful, and an older couple with a giant moose sculpture (*Dangermoose*, shown here) right in front of my studio. They're generally funny, and not dark and isolating like a lot of my other works. The painting of the Amish family makes me happy.



Video Games About Wyoming I grew up playing tons and tons of video games. I don't have as much time to play them now, but I'm into them in the same way I'm into books. There's this game *Firewatch* that is set in the wilderness of Wyoming. It tells a story, and the visuals are gorgeous and have influenced stuff I'm working on now. In the game, the whole landscape is covered by smoke. I'll pause the game and do a drawing. In the game, you can just run around the world they've created and look at things. You don't have to kill anything. And the game *The Last of Us* has this huge section that takes place in "Jackson County." The game has re-created a version of the Teton landscape, and that's part of what makes it so amazing. firewatchgame.com



Mike Piggott and Wendell Field's Art Studios

Every time I go to Mike and Wendell's studios—they're in a building that has the studios of ten artists—it is humbling. They're better at their craft than I am. I don't know if they feel that way, but it's how I feel. Mike (work shown above) is one of the few people whose advice I'll take on things. He's like a sage to me. And then Wendell, he's an interesting artist who's very inspired by the landscape around him. *Studios open by advance appointment, 307/413-4850 or 208/709-7273, 160 S. Cache; Piggott's work can also be seen at Tayloe Piggott Gallery, 62 S. Glenwood*

Photography (Sin City books and Teton sign): David Agnello