

LET'S HOPSCOTCH



VJ YOURSELF

AS A CITY WELL-KNOWN FOR ITS THRIVING VISUAL AND PUBLIC ART COMMUNITY, SAN ANTONIO WAS THE OBVIOUS CHOICE AS THE HOME OF HOPSCOTCH, AN EXPERIENTIAL ART EXHIBIT THAT UNITES ARTISTS IN COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENTS TO CREATE UNIQUE SHARED EXPERIENCES.

By **Claudia Alarcón**

Photography courtesy of **Hopscotch**

Co-founded by entrepreneurs Nicole Jensen and Hunter Inman, Hopscotch originally manifested as a temporary pop-up in Austin in 2019 but the permanent San Antonio location, which opened October 2020, was always the end goal. The 20,000-square-foot, two-story gallery features 14 uniquely curated, immersive installations from more than 40 local, national and international artists that elicit a sense of joy and wonder. Although the exhibit allows artists from all over the globe to experiment with a wide spectrum of mediums and

technology, Hopscotch strives to highlight the work of local artists and collectives.

“We wanted to create unique spaces that were inclusive to all and encouraged guests to be present and take part in their experience,” said Jensen. “San Antonio has an incredibly authentic and vibrant art scene that speaks to the character of the city — it always felt like a natural home for Hopscotch.” In partnership with nonprofit San Antonio Street Art Initiative, Hopscotch dedicated one of the largest rooms to an indoor street art gallery showcasing works that will express the culture of San Antonio, with murals that will rotate over time to feature additional artists.

The stunning space, designed by acclaimed Austin interior designer Leslie Fossler Interiors, is centered around a concept loosely derived from inferred elements of *Alice in Wonderland*. As guests enter, they are greeted with artistic design at every turn, including a mural and rabbit sculpture. “We suggested a kitschy play on fantasy versus reality using visuals within the giant space on the entry level,” says Fossler. “The enormous stairs funnel visitors ‘down the rabbit hole’ to the exhibit spaces, and symbolic elements, iconic shapes and colors speak the language of San Antonio’s culture and vibrancy. We also used as many local artisans as possible.”

Fossler’s team integrated eclectic furnishings, geometric patterned fabrics and tiles in lively tones of brass, peacock blue, aqua and teal green, punctuated by black and white elements. Unique and original decorative lighting brings proportion to the tall ceilings while providing acoustic treatment, playful shapes and subtle illumination. The exhibit spaces

are semi-permanent, and will be rotated bi-annually or as needed. Jensen and Inman played a major role in collaboration for the fabricated design features.

Among the most popular exhibits are the *Rainbow Cave* by Brooklyn’s Basia Goszczynska, built from LEDs and 40,000 salvaged plastic bags (the same amount used in Texas every 2.5 minutes) and fishing nets. *VJ Yourself* by Playmodes, a collective based in Barcelona, Spain, is an interactive dance installation that allows users to dance with their “past selves” using a contagion effect that mirrors their actions on screen. The *Symbiosis* installation by Kuflex, from Moscow, Russia, uses light projection to make participants look like alien beings.

Adding to the overall experience, Jensen and Inman wanted to offer an impressive and unique food and beverage program. They enlisted a local food truck to provide snacks on the patio, and added a bar in the main lounge designed in collaboration with Austin restaurateur C.K. Chin. The bar program, inspired by the installations throughout the space, features specialty cocktails, beer, wine and non-alcoholic beverages created with help of former Deep Eddy Vodka Hospitality Director Tracy Beachman featuring local Texas spirits. Guests may take beverages with them throughout the gallery or enjoy them at the lounge.

“Having a career that has been rooted in hospitality and experience creation, it was very important to me that the ‘Hopscotch Experience’ extend throughout every corner of the space so that every single detail was intentional,” says Jensen. “We wanted to create a holistic environment where food, beverage and community were an integral part of the overall offering.”



SYMBIOSIS

The gallery is also committed to sustainability, implementing measures into daily operations such as 100% biodegradable straws and stir sticks made from natural plant stems. Instead of selling bottled water there is a water fountain refill station where guests can fill their own bottles or purchase one from the gift shop. Guests can also keep their Tossware bar glasses, made from repurposed and recycled water bottles, or leave for Hopscotch to recycle. At the gift shop, guests can find Hopscotch merchandise and unique gifts and custom curiosities made by local artists.

Hopscotch is taking enhanced precautions to make sure the experience is safe for both staff and guests during COVID-19, including mandatory masks and temperature checks for guests and employees, state-of-the-art automated air decontamination systems, limited touch points, HEPA HVAC filters, professional deep cleaning, hand sanitizer stations throughout, limited venue hours and strict capacity limits. ♦

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RAINBOW CAVE