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OGDEN





THE MONARCH

OGDEN'S ART SCENE METAMORPHOSIS

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The freedom of creativity can enable one to turn fleeting and potent moments of anguish, joy or fear into tangible relics of the human experience. On 455 and the historic 25th street in Ogden lives one of these transformations obtained through creativity and vision that is *The Monarch*, the multi-purpose creative epicenter of Ogden that includes a restaurant, artist studios and space for culturally enriching events.

The Monarch started Ogden's creative chrysalis when Fischer Regan Enterprises purchased the historic 1920s *Bigelow Hotel* parking garage that resides what is now the Nine Rails Creative District in 2011. "It began with the amazing natural light that entered the building from everywhere," says Owner **Thaine Fischer**. "Then you take the large open spaces with barrel roofs, incredible architectural design, steel and brick walls—it screamed 'Creative Space.' Unfortunately, no one was listening." Like many large projects, Fischer had many hoops to jump through to be able to embark on this mission to create what *The Monarch* is today. Challenges like purchasing additional land for parking, New Markets Tax Credits and financing kept *The Monarch* in a tight cocoon for a few years. Regardless, Fischer's vision still peeked through.

At first, the objective was to use this space to host a local Farmer's Market for Ogden's many vendors. With 60,000 square feet of freedom, *The Monarch* could easily hold 200 vendors with 10x10 booths. As the natural order of things go, Fischer was stricken with inspiration that changed the course for *The Monarch*. He says, "I was introduced to **Juvenal Reis** (*Reis Studios:NYC*), and we discussed a studio concept that would allow artists to be able to have incredible working environment in Ogden ... Three years later, it's becoming a reality."

A few local artists already inhabit the space, including western painter **Stephen Henry**, who uses the space for his watercolor paintings that romanticize rural Utah and the farmlands from his hometown in Texas. **Elizabeth Robbins** uses the space to make her love for gardening and flowers tangible through her still-life paintings. *The Art Box* is another tenant of *The Monarch*, creating a space for visitors to enjoy interactive candle making, attend art classes and discover unique gifts. This will be opening in August of 2019. In addition to this, *The Monarch* also features *WB's*, where visitors can enjoy coffee, wine or New American cuisine.

The Monarch's purpose is not only to hold studio and exhibit space to help springboard local artists; *The Monarch* strives to provide events that introduce people to the community and helps cultivate the Ogden art scene at large. With its many event

venues within one building (*The Royal Room, The Atrium Room and The Upper Deck*), *The Monarch* is soon to be a landmark for groundbreaking events in local music, art and culture. "The Royal Room is a space designed specifically to host private events up to a 1,000 people. Located on the top floor of *The Monarch*, it has incredible old architectural design with a barrel roof, 270 degrees of natural light and an industrial-elegant feel," Fischer says. The Atrium Room is purposed for art fairs, markets and dinners that can hold up to 200 people. "Our most unique venue is *The Upper Deck*, an outdoor event space wrapped with our Opt Art Monarch mural which can host beer festivals, bbq, food events up to 1500 people," says Fischer.

In that vein, *The Monarch* hosts the largest, most photographed and most visible mural in Ogden called *Monarch in Moda*, created by collaborators **OIARTS**, where Fischer is also a founder. OIARTS is currently working on an exhibit that will be hosted at *The*

Monarch. OIARTS curator **Scott Partia** says, "We are working to build, equip and launch *XIBIT*, a 4,200-square-foot 'flexhibition' space as a centerpiece to *The Monarch's* creative tenants. The whole *Monarch* project has been designed to be synergistic for all the tenants."

All in all, Fischer hopes *The Monarch* will be "fun, interesting and creative. An environment you want to frequent because you feel among your tribe, it's interesting and visually stimulating," he says. *The Monarch* has many of the resources to help uplift and amplify the creatives that call Ogden their home. As Fischer's vision is realized, Ogden will have an outpouring of creative energy coming from the doors of what used to simply be a parking garage. Fischer says, "With amazing proximity to world class outdoor amenities, *Twilight* concerts, hip-cool historic homes and buildings that are actually affordable, we believe all the ingredients to create a great life are here."

Photo courtesy of The Monarch



The Monarch was built out of 1920s parking garage that was purchased for the project in 2011.