

LOCAL STORIES

Meet Diane Brigham: Art & Education Community Leader

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We had the good fortune of connecting with Diane Brigham and we've shared our conversation below.

Hi Diane, we'd love to hear about how you approach risk and risk-taking.

Every day in a nonprofit art organization offers some kind of risk. Will others believe in our mission enough to support the work required to do it? Are our strategies making a meaningful difference in the community? We are always taking a chance. But doing nothing is the greater risk. So the challenge in our work, as in life, is to consider which risks to take. At Ryman Arts we believe that together we can have a positive impact. I often think of our decisions less as risks and more as experiments to test, learn from, and keep moving forward. For example, after the pandemic started, we quickly had to shift to virtual studio classes. We even created a very successful online fundraiser centered around artmaking at home guided by outstanding guest artists, called Ryman Arts Out of the Box. We also observed more people were shopping online. So we launched the new Ryman Arts Studio Shop with a curated mix of gifts to enhance your own creative life with all proceeds going to support our free art classes for talented youth. We have books about artist Herbert D. Ryman, unique art materials to inspire you to make art, and coming soon, a line of products inspired by Herbert Ryman's stunning paintings and drawings. We used the challenges of 2020 to move us forward. Risk taking requires us to be very present and open to possibilities. I see that in my other passion: horses. I take a deep breath, look where we want to go, and as I urge my horse forward—I'm sending myself forward too. There's a joy in the rhythm of forward movement.





Alright, so let's move onto what keeps you busy professionally?

My education and experience have woven together different elements that are all guided by the questions “how can I make a positive difference in the world?” and “How can we use art to bring people together?” I was trained as a teacher, artist, weaver, and later as an executive coach. I combined all that into a career in public school education, museums, and community art organizations. Among the important lessons I have learned: Relationships matter enormously. By helping our peers succeed, we help advance all our work to make the world better. I've had great mentors, and I aim to be a good mentor as well. Those many experiences woven together prepared me for now. How do we visualize what needs and opportunities will exist in a post-pandemic world, and how can we adapt to better address inequities to help young people thrive and the arts flourish?

Let's say your best friend was visiting the area and you wanted to show them the best time ever. Where would you take them? Give us a little itinerary – say it was a week long trip, where would you eat, drink, visit, hang out, etc.

We are fortunate to live in southern California, where an ideal itinerary would include lots of art, eating, and outdoor explorations. I imagine visiting each of these places in-person post pandemic but if necessary, we can adjust and enjoy museum events virtually with takeout dinners and a socially distanced hike! Because I spent a large chunk of my career as head of education there, our first stops would be to the Getty Center and Getty Villa to explore the collections and enjoy

the views. Another day, we'd head over to Pasadena to explore the incredible collections of the Norton Simon Museum, and then relax with a superb cocktail and dinner at Gale's Restaurant on Fair Oaks. Our Ryman Arts headquarters is in downtown LA at the Reef, an intriguing mixed-use beehive of activity. We'd start with a handmade latte at Kofi's Coffee, and of course enjoy the Ryman Arts student art always on display on the 11th Floor at Maker City LA. For a little nostalgia, we'd take a drive over to the Tam O'Shanter on Los Feliz Blvd, where we'd channel our namesake Herb Ryman enjoying a long lunch with his Disney pals, perhaps at Walt Disney's favorite table (#31). It is one of the oldest restaurants in LA and has been serving Disney artists for decades. Then on to Hollywood, where Japan House is tucked into the bustling Hollywood & Highland complex. Whether featuring traditional craft or interactive design, their exhibitions are gems; take time to discover the quiet library on the upper level. Speaking of craft, the Craft Contemporary museum on Wilshire Blvd. brings together collectors, artists and crafters for dynamic programs and exhibitions. Over the weekend, we'd want to visit the Ryman Arts classes in action. On Saturday, we'd head down to California State University Fullerton to meet up with our students in class; we might catch a critique led by one of our teaching artists. Later, we can explore the extensive outdoor contemporary sculpture as we walk around campus. Then we'd head a bit further to South Orange County. Jeannie Denholm might have work on view at her Scape Gallery in Corona del Mar by Elizabeth Turk, an artist who has inspired our students who participated in her Shoreline Project. Then on to Laguna, where we'd stop in the galleries including Sue Greenwood and saltfineart. Maybe a side trip over to Bella Sophia Chocolate: incredibly beautiful art you can eat! On Sunday, back in LA we'd visit Ryman Arts students in the studios on the campus of Otis College of Art & Design and then see what's on view in the Ben Maltz Gallery there. Head up the coast on PCH for some time at the beach. I like to park at the Annenberg Beach House using that as a base for walking the bike path and exploring the Marion Davies estate. If we plan ahead, I would arrange a sumptuous takeout picnic lunch from Alchemy Kitchen. Not only is the food amazing, but the presentation is also so artistic. Now drive along Sunset Blvd to Will Rogers State Park. Bring along our Ryman Travel Watercolor Set and Sketchbook on the hike to the aptly named Inspiration Point to paint the views at sunset on our final evening.





Who else deserves some credit and recognition?

Let's send a big shoutout to the whole Ryman Arts community of students, alumni, teachers, and colleagues. Especially I'd like to recognize our Founders including Marty and Leah Sklar, Buzz and Anne Price, Sharon Disney Lund, and Lucille Ryman Carroll who created the vision for this organization over thirty years ago and the Board of Directors who guide us today, including our President, Phil Hetteema. One Board member, fashion designer Monica Leigh Rodriguez (www.monicaleigh.com) deserves special note for her design guidance on our new Studio Shop and how she has reimagined the way we can appreciate Herbert Ryman's sketches and paintings by incorporating them into a contemporary line of products.

Website: www.rymanarts.org

Instagram: [Instagram.com/rymanarts](https://www.instagram.com/rymanarts)

Other: <https://ryman-arts.myshopify.com/>

Nominate Someone: ShoutoutLA is built on recommendations and shoutouts from the community; it's how we uncover hidden gems, so if you or someone you know deserves recognition please let us know [here](#).