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## EAST Interview: Community and Art with Sean Gaulager of Co-Lab



[David Ellis working on a mural; photo by Donald Mason](#)  
[East Austin Studio Tour](#)

Saturday, November 20 and Sunday,  
November 21  
Co-Lab New Media Project Space ([613 Allen Street](#))  
Free, 11am - 6pm  
[\[info\]](#)

Today we're talking to Sean Gaulager, one of the founders of [Co-Lab](#), a community based art space in East Austin. Gaulager started Co-Lab in 2008 when he saw a void in gallery space for non-traditional artists. The focus here is on providing space for constantly rotating collaborations, screenings, performances and installations - and making it possible for new media artists to show their work more frequently. An on-site community garden furthers the connection to this East Austin community.

Gaulager spoke with us about Co-Lab's current exhibitions (including an impressive miniature city contained within a sand box, installed in the main gallery), what excites him about the Austin art scene, how Co-Lab has changed in the short two years of its existence.

**We love that Co-Lab was inspired by creating a community space for Austin-based artists. Can you tell us a little about the history of Co-Lab - what was the catalyst for creation?**

Basically Co-Lab was created as an extremely accessible model for artists working in new media to engage and exercise their ideas and as a space that could facilitate other community oriented activities (i.e. community garden). We saw many artists (myself included) exploring non-traditional ways of art making and felt that a dedicated venue could really help these artists execute these projects.

### **What is your own art and design background?**

I starting blowing glass right out of high school and soon after found a joy in not only making art but also facilitating it. After helping found a couple of non-profits and assistant-directing a commercial gallery downtown I was looking to start another project, one that could be a little more relaxed and open to possibilities and a more rounded dialogue. I am currently making video art when possible and support Co-Lab by working as a preparator/art installation tech.

### **What can we expect to see during EAST at Co-Lab?**

We have several projects currently in process or completed (I say in process because many are time based) such as the piece in the main space called *Intransigent* by Stacy Elko and Sang-Mi Yoo. These two Lubbock based artists have created a temporary civilization of sand castles and wall dwellings. The sand castle city spans a 10' x 10' area and is being slowly eroded by dripping water from above, giving the effect of a crumbling cityscape. As of Sunday the city was pretty washed out but there is some restoration planned so viewers this weekend can get the full effect. In the back room there is a selection of Co-Lab and MASS Gallery artists on display, these works are mostly 2D and a priced to sell. Outside Chris Burch and Geoff Galvez have begun what will be a year long project of constructing a copse of tree sculptures, the first of which was completed for the tour. Also outside is a faux finished picnic table made from linoleum wood flooring and complete with astro turf shadow.

### **How has Co-Lab evolved since its opening?**

For starters the property itself has changed a lot, after building a cinderblock garden space and installing a fence I built and installed a wood mural wall stretching almost the length of the building. The project unlike prior years now has some city funding through the cultural arts division and is seeking further funding through other grants. In terms of programming the space and the public's engagement of it has set an escalating standard that artists continue to rise to and above inspiring ever better and concise projects from those who follow.

### **What excites you most about the Austin art scene? Is there anything, in your opinion, that needs improvement?**

The incredibly supportive community we find ourselves creating and experiencing. I love that Austin is becoming part of the art world dialogue yet still has so much room for artists and others to become involved or just up and start something. However it overwhelmingly lacks support, in a city with the largest per capita percentage of non-profits how can you blame anyone for not being able to fund your art... everyone here has a cause. Galleries and art spaces pop up and shut down so erratically its amazing some have been around for 30+ years. I don't think it's the art scene that is lacking but that the city is catching up to the cultural phenomena that is occurring here, if the public wants the arts to continue to be available they must support them.

### **Do you have any advice for aspiring artists?**

Don't expect that you will ever prosper simply because you make art, make art only because you are driven to. Help others around you rise and you will rise yourself.

Contact the [author](#) of this article or email [tips@austinist.com](mailto:tips@austinist.com) with further questions, comments or tips.

By [kristen pumphrey](#) in [Arts & Entertainment](#) on Nov 19, 2010 11:30 AM

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