

ARTS

Gallery changes hands, adds new artists

Manager acquires Meyer Gallery, adopts new name.

By Johanna Love

Mariam Alaskari answered the telephone on March 23 and said, "Hello, Meyer-Milagros Gallery," for the first time.

After signing the requisite papers last week, Alaskari, who had managed Meyer Gallery for two years in its home at 155 Center St., bought the gallery from owner Susan Meyer Jones of Park City, Utah. Alaskari picked the new name, the Spanish word for "miracle," from an article in *Southwest Art* magazine describing the work of Allan Mardon, an artist represented by Meyer who was supportive of Alaskari's gallery purchase.

"It all clicked and came together," Alaskari said. "The fact I'm getting the gallery is a miracle, that I came across the word in an article was serendipity."

Upon moving to Jackson more than three years ago, Alaskari worked for a year in the capacity she spent a decade, raising money from major donors for the Center for the Arts. She decided to "take a break" from fundraising and began directing



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Mariam Alaskari is the new owner of Meyer Gallery, now known as Meyer-Milagros. Alaskari bought the gallery last week after working there for two and a half years.

Meyer Gallery two years ago, and now finds herself as the owner of one of the town's 35 or so art galleries.

"This was not my background," Alaskari said, "but as soon as I landed it, I took to it. It was timing and luck and lots of hard work."

Alaskari, now 37, grew up outside New York City to art- and travel-loving parents. From a young age, Alaskari traveled the world with her parents, visiting galleries in New York, London, Munich, Beirut and Baghdad.

"I got a well-rounded perspective on art and art history from all over the

world," she said.

Alaskari is excited that she was able to purchase the gallery without any financial backers who might want to slant the gallery's content. "It gives me more freedom in the direction of the gallery," she said. "I'm excited at the opportunity to bring some fresh ideas into Jackson, in terms of more modern works."

The gallery is retaining most of its artists, including Mary Roberson, Tim Cherry, Shanna Kunz and Ryan Skidmore. Some — like sculptor Brad Rude, whose animals "are on a journey," perched on

wheels and composed of various mixed breed parts — already are a blend of wildlife and contemporary styles.

Meyer-Milagros Gallery will take on 15 new artists this spring, all in concert with Alaskari's "less Western" focus. Jason Wheatley paints large still lifes that often contain birds and flowers. Patrick LoCicero's mixed-media works will feature hats. Ann Krasner paints bright, square canvases full of segmented, colorful figures.

New items will begin to arrive in May, and on July 3, Meyer-Milagros will host a grand opening fete, when all new artists will have work hanging in the 2,000-square-foot space.

One reason Meyer-Milagros will refrain from representing traditional Western art is that it has already been done, and done well, Alaskari said, by galleries like Trailside and Legacy.

"I can't try and replicate what they're selling," Alaskari said.

Bringing in more contemporary artists will add a new flavor to Jackson, she said.

"I think it's going to be exciting, fun and refreshing," Alaskari said.



Jason Wheatley paints still lifes, often with birds, as in *Blossom Droppers*.