



Location sought for Inland Empire Museum of Art

The Inland Empire Museum of Art collection shares space with photographer and museum founder Gene Sasse's Upland studio. (Photo by Suzanne Sproul)

By [Suzanne Sproul](#), Inland Valley Daily Bulletin Posted: 02/17/15, 5:22 PM PST

The Inland Empire Museum of Art collection shares space with photographer and museum founder Gene Sasse's Upland studio. (Photo by Suzanne Sproul)

The Inland Empire Museum of Art has borrowed rooms filled with works and supporters have a contagious optimism for big future plans.

What is needed most, however, is a home. The IEMA, www.iearts.org, is the brainchild of photographer and art lover Gene Sasse.

Sasse seems to be an unofficial magnet for art – local and Southern California artists seek him out and donate many of their pieces. He keeps them all in space shared with his Upland studio. His feelings are printed on his business card – “Change is constant in the art and business of photographer, but the goal remains the same. Capture more than meets the eye. Tell a story and communicate a feeling without words.”

But the time has come for the stories, the feelings and the art to have a home. He is passionate in believing the museum is destined for a permanent residence. Rancho Cucamonga ideally would make a great home city, he said, because of its central location to Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

“We have something like 2.8 million people living within a 20-mile radius of the 210 and 15 freeways and even more when you expand from there. That’s a lot of people and there simply isn’t enough museums and museum programming to serve everyone. This area is underserved,” Sasse said. “I strongly believe that if you do exciting and dynamic exhibits, people will come.”

Laurie Morrison is a grandmother and art lover, too, eager to get involved and help make this museum quest a reality. She’s so committed that she joined the board. “I am very excited about this and the vision for the museum’s future. There is so much here in the Inland Valley, so many artists and so much art in the collection that there simply isn’t room for it all. It needs a home. This is going to be an amazing addition to our community.”

Those unfamiliar with the collection and the museum’s efforts can get a peek at both during an upcoming exhibit, “Contemporary Art from California’s Inland Empire.” The exhibit runs from April 11 through May 3 at the Millard Sheets Center for the Arts at Fairplex, 1101 W. McKinley Ave., Pomona. An opening reception is set for April 12 from 2:30 to 5 p.m.

Sasse and Morrison said this exhibit will provide a terrific platform for the collection, which spotlights more than 130 artists and 200 pieces dating from the mid-1900s to today. They hope art fans who don't know about the museum now, will become familiar with it and join their efforts at establishing a home. A location is needed and, as is the case with all nonprofits, financial support is essential to success.

The idea behind the museum is to connect inspiration with education while inviting the community to fully participate. Those hoping to establish a home base for the museum want to promote an understanding and appreciation for the arts, particularly among young people. Along with the present extensive collection is the Young Eyes Gallery.

In addition to art, plans are to have young people story times, classes and speakers. Supporters also would like to offer educational outreach arts programs to local schools. Museum admission would be free.

Museum memberships start at \$25 for a student with identification and \$40 for an individual or family member.

"The Inland Empire Museum of Art needs exposure and a building. We hope the community will come to the April exhibit so they can discover and appreciate what's here. It will be wonderful to have such a museum just around the corner," Morrison said.

About the Author



Reach the author at Suzanne.Sproul@inlandnewspapers.com .
Inland Valley Daily Bulletin www.dailybulletin.com