

# 'Where's Walsenburg?'

Project tries to create comprehensive portrait of struggling town

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THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN



COURTESY PHOTOS/ZOE CHILDERLEY  
Zoe Childerley, artist-in-residence at the Museum of Friends in Walsenburg, took this photo of farmer Kyle Bohannon as part of the "Where's Walsenburg?" project.



Childerley titled this blog entry "Marie's Grass." Marie and her family moved to Walsenburg from Oklahoma City last year.



A pet wolf rests outside a home in Gardner.



As this sign in Gardner attests, many residents of Huerfano County oppose Shell Oil's fracking.



Childerley captured this view of the mountains from a home in Gardner.



A cat takes a look around a pile of tires.



**W**ALSENBURG — A good photograph can do a great deal to bridge a cultural gap.

English photographer Zoe Childerley has proven as much during her two-month stay as an artist-in-residence at the Walsenburg's Museum of Friends. She is the first to participate in "Where's Walsenburg?" a project started by museum directors Brendt Berger and Maria Cocchiarelli-Berger.

The goal of the program, which will continue with a new artist-in-residence each year, is to illuminate "all of the social aspects" of the town and its surrounding areas, said Cocchiarelli-Berger. The idea is based on the work of photographer James VanDerZee, who used his pictures to document life in Harlem in the first half of the 20th century.

"There's an art term — introversion — (that says) the role of an artist in contemporary society is to use our imagination and creativity to elicit social change," said Cocchiarelli-Berger. "It's very similar to the role of the museum."

Childerley, 38, arrived in Walsenburg at the beginning of June. She is a senior lecturer in photography at De Montfort University in Leicester, England. She visited Colorado three years ago as part of an artists' program in Trinidad, which is where she met the Bergers.

"This is an unusual

SEE WALSENBURG, 2E

## PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

People who posed for portraits as part of the "Where's Walsenburg?" project were asked to fill out a questionnaire, the results of which will accompany the exhibit. Here's a sample of the type of information sought via the questions:

- Age, gender, ethnicity, marital status
- Length of time living in the area
- Where they see themselves in 20 years

• First in their family to graduate from high school/college?

- What they like/don't like about living in Walsenburg (or surrounding area)
- What they would change about Walsenburg
- Hobbies

Respondents also were asked to answer these questions using a five-point scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree":

- I am generally happy with my life.
- I believe I deserve the life I have.
- I am an artist.
- I can be anything I want to be in life.

— Amy Matthew



The Spanish Peaks ballroom in Walsenburg also is used for health classes. The sheet-covered form toward the left of the picture is a CPR dummy.

## IF YOU GO

**WHAT:** 'Where's Walsenburg? The Images of Zoe Childerley' and 'Portraits from the Heart' by Eudora Welty

**WHEN:** Aug. 24-Dec. 21; opening reception, 6-8 p.m. Aug. 24 (museum will be closed most of August in preparation for the exhibit)

**WHERE:** Museum of Friends, 600 Main St., Walsenburg

**ADMISSION:** Free. Donations are accepted to fund the museum's educational programs and exhibits.

**INFO:** 719-738-2858, museumoffriends.org and <http://zoechilderley.wordpress.com>



**"**Hardly anybody said no. There's definitely that 'separated by a common language' thing (but) I think it's been helpful being a foreigner. I'm not so in their system. I can talk to the bartender and then talk to the judge and they treat me the same. I'm on level footing with everyone.

Zoe Childerley

## ALSO ON EXHIBIT: EUDORA WELTY

"Portraits from the Heart," a series of photos taken by Eudora Welty, will accompany the "Where's Walsenburg?" exhibit at the Museum of Friends.

Welty is remembered primarily as a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, but she was an avid photographer and

took many pictures while working as a publicity agent for the Works Progress Administration in her home state of Mississippi in the 1930s.

The 20 images featured in the Walsenburg show are from that time frame and tie in with the overall exhibit's focus on life in small-town

America. Museum director Maria Cocchiarelli-Berger first saw the pictures in the 1980s.

"The humanity of the people in these photographs has never left me," she said.

The exhibit will run from Aug. 24 to Dec. 21.

— Amy Matthew