

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Art Queen Enters a New Era of Stewardship in Joshua Tree**

*AHA Projects guides preservation, artist opportunity, and expanded programming through 2026*



**Joshua Tree, CA (February 2, 2026)** - Art Queen, the long-standing artist compound in Downtown Joshua Tree, enters a new chapter under the stewardship of AHA Projects, with preservation efforts, expanded programming, and new artist opportunities unfolding through 2026. Long known as a place of creative freedom in the high desert, Art Queen has drawn artists, makers, and visitors for years through a mix of experimentation, exchange, and community connection that feels inseparable from Joshua Tree itself.

Originally built in the early 1940s, Art Queen evolved into a cultural hub under former owner Randy Palumbo, with artist Shari Elf playing a formative role in shaping its identity. Elf, founder of the

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Crochet Museum, helped establish the property as a home for artist-run spaces, craft, and community-driven creativity outside traditional institutional models.

For years, Art Queen has carried a quiet sense of wonderment rooted in place and time. Tucked into the high desert, it has long been a site where artists gather, ideas cross paths, and creative work unfolds at its own pace. Beyond studios and shops, Art Queen has offered space for craft, experimentation, gathering, and performance, hosting readings, plays, film screenings, workshops, and informal convenings that create opportunities for both local and visiting artists to connect with one another and with the wider community. That layered history has made Art Queen feel less like a destination and more like a living part of the place.

“Joshua Tree has always attracted artists because it offers space to think, experiment, and work outside conventional systems,” said Cheyanne Sauter, Executive Director of AHA Projects. “By acquiring Art Queen, we are using land ownership as a practical tool to protect those conditions. Our goal is to ensure that artists and creative businesses can continue to create, perform, and connect here over the long term, even as the region continues to change.”

One of Art Queen’s longest-standing vendors, Beauty Bubble, reflects the continuity and creative spirit that define the site.

“I love being a member of this community of creatives. The Beauty Bubble found the perfect home at Art Queen. There is something really special about making and sharing work in Joshua Tree, surrounded by the desert, the light, and a community that genuinely supports artists. It is so fun to be part of this unique, colorful, and eclectic place.”

Jeff Hafler, owner of Beauty Bubble

Art Queen is also home to Space Cowboy Books, which marks its tenth year at the property in 2026 and has long served as a cornerstone of the site’s literary and cultural programming.

“In my decade at Art Queen, it has remained a hub of culture and community, hosting Pride events, plays, film screenings, readings, gallery exhibitions, art workshops, and more. It is a place where art can thrive surrounded by the natural beauty of the desert.”

Jean-Paul L. Garnier, owner of Space Cowboy Books and Editor in Chief of *Electronic Brain Magazine*

As investment in the Joshua Tree area continues to increase, AHA Projects stepped in to protect the artists and makers who have shaped this environment. AHA Projects acquired the property in 2024 to preserve it for arts and culture, safeguarding it from overdevelopment while maintaining its artist-centered character. Since the acquisition, improvements have focused on land stewardship,

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infrastructure, and operational support that expand access to affordable creative space while retaining Art Queen's distinctive, artist-driven spirit.

Current artist vendors at Art Queen include Beauty Bubble, Space Cowboy Books, the Crochet Museum, the Shari Elf Store, Studio Alvarez, Joshua Tree Blanket Company, Nomadic Ceramic, Gitana Gold, Strictly Retro Vinyl + Vintage, Robert Warner Leather, Simon Says, Lorenzo, Sun Spot, and a rotating mix of artist studios and independent creative shops. On-site art galleries include La Matadora, Coyote Little Gallery + Learning Center, and the Alien Robot Museum.

Additional announcements related to artist residencies, performances, public programming, and partnerships will roll out through 2026.

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## About Art Queen

Art Queen is an artist-centered creative campus in Downtown Joshua Tree, California. Home to a longstanding community of independent artists, makers, and small creative businesses, Art Queen provides space for studios, galleries, retail, performances, workshops, and artist-led initiatives. Rooted in the desert's DIY spirit, Art Queen remains committed to affordability, experimentation, and sustaining creative life in the Morongo Basin. <https://artqueen.org/> [@artqueen\\_jt](https://www.instagram.com/artqueen_jt)

## About AHA Projects

AHA Projects is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and sustaining arts and cultural spaces. Through stewardship, advocacy, and operational support, the organization works to ensure that artists and creative communities have long-term access to space, resources, and stability. Affordable Housing for Artists brings more than two decades of nonprofit leadership experience to projects across California. <https://aha-projects.org/>

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