Girl Power.
Meet Alice Coles, Artist in Residence for 40 West Arts

Alice Coles breathes a sigh of contentment as she settles into an armchair next to the expansive floor-to-ceiling glass windows on one wall of the studio that she now calls home. Her completely free-of-charge live/work space at Metro West Housing’s Lamar Station Crossing Apartments is just one of the perks of being Artist in Residence for 40 West Arts District. “Being in the heart of the arts district is so great. I love being in the middle of all the action. It’s easy to see change happening in this neighborhood, murals, sculptural art, tons of workshops, everything really.”

Alice Coles is petite with long brown hair that reaches to her mid-back. She’s about as bubbly and energetic as they come, gleefully describing her recent weekend at Denver’s ComicCon and rapidly swiping through images on her phone as she explains her costume to me. Just so you know, she went as Claire from the hit movie Jurassic World, and even carried a 6-foot inflatable dinosaur through the event.

But when it comes to art and the Artist in Residence program in particular, Alice gets serious. “I’m drawn to the healing power of art,” says Coles, who specializes in graphic design, painting and illustration and is pursuing 3D animation and concept art at Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design. “I’m passionate about making art inclusive and empowering community members, including youth and seniors, who may not have creative confidence, and beyond that, social confidence.”

Alice will serve as 40 West Arts District’s 3rd Artist in Residence. In collaboration with Metro West Housing Solutions, Lakewood-West Colfax Business Improvement District, West Colfax Community Association, and RMCAD, 40 West Arts created the Artist in Residence program in January 2014. The program serves as another avenue to catalyze the West Colfax Corridor through the arts, showcasing the apartment community at Lamar Station Crossing, creating an inspirational arts destination in the district, and serving the community with free art workshops and demonstrations.

“This has been one of our most successful community programs. We’ve had remarkable young people as our resident artists,” said 40 West Arts Board Chair Bill Marino. “Each one of them has made a mark on our community with their creative energy and passion for art, and Alice fits right in. She is going to be a great asset. We are very grateful to our community partners for making this program possible.”

Alice will teach 6 programs and workshops during the course of the year in addition to coordinating artistic events with other district partners. She recently developed programming for a local youth summer camp including a quirky and artistic workshop on building your own robot puppet.

Coles is a self-described “fantasy geek” and is inclined to downplay her artistic ability, instead laughingly describing her love of all things Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings. But if you head over to her You Tube channel, HulloAlice you’re confronted with a reminder of both her work ethic and skill. Her ‘speed paint’ videos show the hand of an adept artist working in watercolor to render Pocahontas, cartoon animals, and long-haired comic girls, among other things. Did I mention that the
final images are stunning? And with over 56,000 (yep that's right) subscribers, it's clear that Alice has a huge following.

“I just want to do what I love and to be passionate about the things that I put into the world” she says with a smile. And what are some of those other perks to being an Artist in Residence? Alice giggles a bit in her signature style and then thoughtfully pauses. “I mean, just the ability to work with and be around so many creatives is amazing. And this arts district is growing, changing, expanding every day. It's so cool to be in on the ground floor.” The folks at 40 West Arts District couldn't agree more.