



## Roped In

**Rocky Mountain artists use climbing rope to reach their creative peaks**

Few landscapes can match the natural beauty of the Rocky Mountains, and a handful of regional artists are using an appropriate material—old climbing ropes—to capture that scenery.

Telluride, Colorado-based climber and skier Laura Vallo started making such pieces last July, when she had some downtime thanks to pandemic lockdowns and a hand injury. Using her retired climbing ropes, backed with recycled yoga mats, she creates rugs and wall hangings, many of them showing scenes from the local San Miguel Mountains. “Over time, I started incorporating big, swirly suns and making it a little bit more whimsical,” she says. She now has a long waiting list for commissions.

Hailey Hosken, an artist who also works as a route setter at a climbing gym in Bozeman, Montana, uses retired ropes in her pieces as well, with some of her most popular commissions depicting climbing areas like the Tetons, the Cascades, and Denali. “Living in the Mountain West provides ample inspiration for my work,” she says, adding that some patrons donate rope to be used in commissions. “Each piece of my own climbing gear holds a lot of

memories, so when I’m using multiple ropes, I like to imagine the multitude of stories and memories being woven into each piece.”

Mick Tresemer, who’s based in Boulder, Colorado, has been using climbing rope from Boulder Sports Recycler as a material since 2013. Known locally as “the rope guy,” he may be the progenitor of this style of art. His complex, 3-D sculptures, which can reach up to 5 feet tall, may not seem as directly mountain-inspired as the works of his contemporaries, but they often harness a deeply personal connection. “On several occasions, I have been asked to use the actual rope that saved someone’s life to create an image of the mountain they climbed,” he says. “These stories are immortalized, and the relic of rope is cast into art that will last.”



**From top:**  
a Mount Baker moon scene by Laura Vallo;  
a portrayal of the Tetons by Hailey Hosken