



Tilting the Basin Gives Contemporary Art a Powerful Voice in Nevada

Kristen Peterson Wed. Mar. 15, 2017

Nevada's landscape, generous with open skies, beautiful isolation and distant vistas, is famously unforgiving in its limited resources. At night, sunsets emit color and light rivaled only by the electric corridors of its two famous cities. Scale is everything. We see so far away here. We are so far away here.



Work by Krystal Ramirez

It's within this uniquely physical and peculiar psychological realm that JoAnne Northrup of the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno and Las Vegas-based art adviser Michele C. Quinn reached out to artists living in the state's northern and southern regions, announcing studio visits in aim of

examining contemporary art being created here. The result would be an unprecedented exhibit uniting artists navigating Nevada’s urban and rural landscapes.

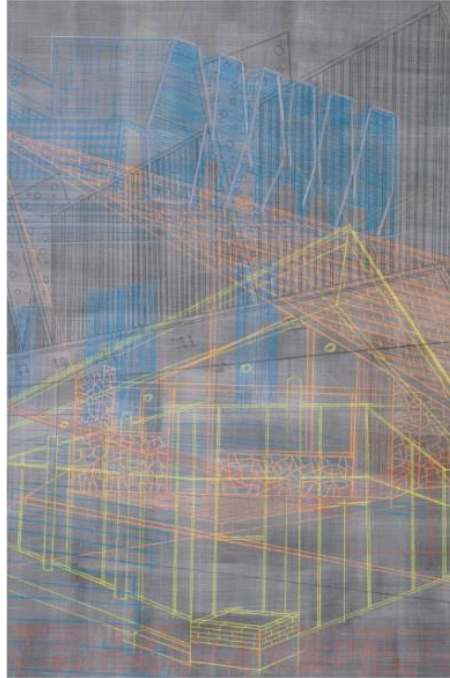
Tilting the Basin: Contemporary Art of Nevada opened in August 2016, featuring 34 artists—17 from Southern Nevada and 17 from Northern Nevada. The broad survey of style, media and technique at the Nevada Museum of Art was designed to showcase significant works created in a vast and somewhat isolated area that lives “on the periphery of mainstream culture,” allowing for “radical experimentation,” according to an exhibit statement.



Work by Sean Slattery. Photo by Krystal Ramirez

It was a splash—a robust show with a powerful voice for art in the Silver State. Well-curated and bonded together by the growing relationship between the state’s northern and southern art communities—one with a major art museum, another trying to establish one—its rich commentary, whether direct or not, speaks to Nevada’s topography, public lands, cultures and communities.

This week, *Tilting* makes its Las Vegas debut in a partnership between the northern museum and the in-the-works Art Museum at Symphony Park, giving Southern Nevadans an opportunity to experience the aesthetic and intellect poured into starkly minimalist and tidy works and complex sculptures made from a lavish garden of divergent material. Textiles, photography and works on paper, glass and wood meet a large installation speaking to the idea of Las Vegas’ urban landscapes shifting and changing in hyperspeed, compared to the millennia it took for the area’s natural geography to form.



Work by Shawn Hummel. Photo by Krystal Ramirez

Rachel Stiff's abstract landscapes present the bizarre and beautiful melding of the real and surreal, the subtle and sublime. She pours (literally) the strata of sky in solid colors, horizontal and fluid, above massive, millions-of-years-old rock formations in a mixing of media that, much like Nevada, is both solid and dreamlike.

Resounding color, light and form, mixed with harsh terrain, live in Las Vegas artist **Sean Slattery's** abstract desert scenes built on themes of popular culture, which meet with reinterpretations of narrative landscapes created by Northern Nevada's **Jeffrey Erickson**. In all white, **Katie Lewis'** hands-on process of paper punching reflects the topography of Northern Nevada.

Then there is the sheer intrigue of Reno-area artist **Galen Brown's** work built over broad stretches of time using found material, which contrasts in style with Las Vegas-based **Mark Brandvik's** hand-cut, life-size enamel white Volkswagen Westfalia camper reduced to its unmistakable form. As with Las Vegas **David Ryan's** minimal abstract works of unabashed color play, Brandvik's perfection is seductive.



Work by JW Caldwell. Photo by Krystal Ramirez

The exhibit, designed to bridge the divide between north and south, presents one whole that can't help but tap into identity. **Matthew Couper** tackles water shortage, consumption and greed in "Mother's Milk Aquifer" with a large-scale Spanish colonial style painting made contemporary. **Wendy Kveck's** portraits of women and excess through rich strokes and cake-frosting-style meet **JK Russ'** otherworldly collages.



Work by Rachel Stiff. Photo by Krystal Ramirez

Brent Sommerhauser's large bell mouth made out of wooden floor tiles talks with *Vegas Seven* photographer **Krystal Ramirez's** sculptural paper works that build off her internal dialogues about identity. Las Vegas' **Sush Machida**, who is known for his use of color in Japanese Edo-inspired Pop Art works, switches it up with hyperrealist lumber: two-by-fours that feature neon graffiti in fluid lines, with the same orderliness and precision of his goldfish paintings seen throughout the community.

Tilting the Basin is a strong show that stands on its own ("Would it hold up at Basel?" was a consideration when looking at works), but the exhibit resonates personally with those who live in Nevada.

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Tilting the Basin on view March 16 through May 14 at a pop up facility, located at 920 S. Commerce Street, Las Vegas.

Wednesday –Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm, Fridays until 9pm