

FORWARD PROGRESS

POP-UP MUSEUM FOR ‘TILTING THE BASIN’ EXHIBIT COULD BE SIGN OF THINGS TO COME

Carol Cling March 17, 2017



Carson City-based Galen Brown shares a laugh with a fellow artist during the pre-opening installation of “Tilting the Basin: Contemporary Art of Nevada,” now open at a downtown warehouse following a 2016 run at Reno’
Credit: Benjamin Hager/ Las Vegas Review Journal Follow @BenjaminHPhoto

Pay no attention to the street sign that warns “Road Closed to Thru Traffic.” The unpaved road - Commerce Street, just south of where it meets Main Street – leads to the warehouse turned pop-up museum hosting “Tilting the Basin: Contemporary Art of Nevada “ through May 14.

The rocky road also leads, organizers hope, to a future art museum that Las Vegas can call its very own.

When “Tilting the Basin” opened last year at Reno’s Nevada Museum of Art, “we told everyone (the exhibit) was going to Las Vegas, even though we didn’t have a place,” recalls co-curator JoAnne Northrup, NMA’s curatorial director and curator of contemporary art. “The space was definitely a challenge,” agrees co-curator Michele Quinn, Las Vegas-based art adviser of MCQ Fine Art.

But Quinn had been working with developer Steven Molasky, who was in the process of acquiring a 40,000-square-foot Commerce Street warehouse that “couldn’t be more perfect” as a setting for “Tilting the Basin.”

With “fantastic natural light,” the space is “renovated to the minimum – the floors are done, the walls are up,” she says. “And that’s all we need.”

The warehouse exhibit space is more than twice the size of the NMA gallery where “Tilting the Basin” debuted last year, so there’s “more room to breathe,” Quinn observes, for the 100-plus works by 34 working Nevada artists.

That’s apparent on a recent afternoon as Quinn joins multiple artists busy installing their works to re-create “Tilting the Basin” in the warehouse turned museum.

Artist JQ Caldwell’s riding high on Skyjack lift, helping Chris Martin – head of preparation for the Nevada Museum of Art – suspend Carson City artist Galen Brown’s series of “Trees” from the lofty ceiling.

They worked with the artist in Reno and gained an understanding of how the work should look, Marin explains.

Las Vegas-based David Ryan, meanwhile, is busy hanging his three-dimensional “Traced Tuttle” – with a little help from fellow artist Sean Slattery, also of Las Vegas.

Local Brent Sommerhauser is on the floor, painstakingly applying rubber cement to individual wooden tongue-and-groove floor segments – about 900 of them – for his piece “Curl.”

And Reno-based Katie Lewis is putting the finishing touches on the installation of her “6359, 8718, 11284, 4531, 9143” – spans of delicate maroon threads representing the number of steps she took on specific days. It’s the first time her work has been exhibited in Las Vegas.

“It’s a beautiful space,” Lewis says of the pop-up museum. “There’s room. It’s more open” than the NMA gallery.

The exhibit’s Las Vegas run represents a partnership between NMA – which also coordinated the debut of artist Ugo Rondinone’s “Seven Magic Mountains” last year in the desert south of Las Vegas - and backers of a future Symphony Park art museum. (The latter is known, logically enough, as the Art Museum at Symphony Park.)

“Tilting the Basin” has “been a really good bridge, or partnership, with us artists” from across Nevada, says Ryan, who expresses hope that the pop-up museum housing the exhibit will lead to a permanent one. “It feels like it’s got the right momentum and people in place,” he says.

On the road to Symphony Park

“Tilting the Basin: Contemporary Art of Nevada” may be installed through May 14 in a pop-up warehouse museum on South Commerce Street. But it’s a steppingstone for one of its presenting sponsors, the Art Museum at Symphony Park.

Exhibit co-curator – and museum board member – Michele Quinn says backers of the hoped-for museum are “off to a good start.”

So far, Quinn says, they’ve raised \$2 million and have a memo of understanding from the city of Las Vegas that the museum “will receive a parcel of land in Symphony Park” as a location. Now, organizers are “trying to figure out the perfect location.”

The proposed museum has “got a name, we’ve got a location,” she points out. “There are a lot of issues, but the stars are aligning.”

Overall, “we’re excited about it,” Quinn says of her fellow board members, adding that “this show will speak volumes” about the future of the planned museum.

“People need to have patience,” Quinn says. “It’s not something we can do by just snapping our fingers. I feel like it’s the right place at the right time.”

Special programs

Programs for families, educators and art lovers will augment the museum’s two-month run in a pop-up Arts District space.

Among the scheduled highlights:

Community Salon — 6 p.m. Friday; David Walker, the Nevada Museum of Art’s executive director, and Katie O’Neill, who chairs the Art Museum at Symphony Park’s board of directors, will discuss art, culture, community and the future of art museums in Nevada with Amanda Horn, NMA’s director of communications

Artists Panel Discussion — 2 p.m. Saturday; Northern and Southern Nevada artists (including Las Vegas-based Justin Favela, David Ryan and Brent Sommerhauser) join curators JoAnne Northrup and Michele Quinn to discuss the Silver State’s contemporary art scene

First Fridays — 6 to 9 p.m. April 7 and May 5; food and drink, entertainment, gallery tours, hands-on art and discussions about a permanent art museum in Las Vegas

Community Days — 10 a.m.-6 p.m. April 15 and May 13; local "Tilting the Basin" artists will design and host daylong workshops for children and families to create collaborative artwork, attend guided gallery tours and meet working artists

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What: "Tilting the Basin: Contemporary Art of Nevada"

When: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays (until 9 p.m. Fridays), Friday through May 14

Where: 920 S. Commerce St.

Admission: Free (702-201-4253; www.nevadaart.org/exhibition/tilting-the-basin-contemporary-art-of-nevada)