

POP-UP ART MUSEUM IN DOWNTOWN LAS VEGAS FEATURES WORKS FROM ARTISTS ACROSS THE STATE

Carol Cling Thursday, March 11, 2017 (9:29 a.m.)



Justin Favela *The Valley of Mexico from the Santa Isabel Mountain Range (Valle de Mexico desde el cerro de Santa Isabel)*, after Jose Maria Velasco, 2016 Paper and glue on board 64 x 86 in.

The exhibit “Tilting the Basin” is finally tilting toward Southern Nevada.

After a 2½-month run last year at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, the show — subtitled “Contemporary Art of Nevada” — officially opens Friday in an Arts District warehouse turned pop-up museum. A Thursday night opening celebration will bring the public together with artists and curators.

Nevada Museum of Art is partnering with the Art Museum at Symphony Park — the organization working toward a future Las Vegas art museum — to present “Tilting the Basin,” which spotlights the work of more than 30 Nevada artists.

Curated by NMA’s JoAnne Northrup and Las Vegas-based Michele C. Quinn of MCQ Fine Art, “Tilting the Basin” reflects the unique voices, and approaches, of artists working in Nevada.

“I don’t want to see five artists doing the same thing,” Quinn says, describing the exhibit as a survey of what’s happening in the state.

And what’s happening is a surprise to a lot of people, Northrup notes, because it’s impressive.

Even though Nevada has a special license plate proclaiming the Silver State to be “Rich in Art,” Northrup says, “art is not the first thing I think of” in connection with Nevada. “I was surprised by the talent.”

Quinn also was “pleasantly surprised” by the Reno artists, but she already knew the quality of work being done in Las Vegas.

In putting “Tilting the Basin” together, the curators wanted to focus on emerging, working artists whose work had shown development over time, Northrup explains.

Six of those artists — three from Southern Nevada, three from Northern Nevada — were featured with multiple works representing, in Northrup’s words, “the strongest work in the state.”

In the case of the featured artists, “just one work doesn’t tell the story,” Quinn says. “It’s a more in-depth view.”

Las Vegas-based Brent Sommerhauser, one of the featured “Tilting the Basin” artists, characterizes the show as “more eclectic than it is cohesive.”

The “eclectic” description definitely fits Sommerhauser’s work, which includes blown glass (“The Well”), woodwork (“Bellmouth,” “Curl”) and drawings — made by forcing air into a chamber, where soft metal fragments leave their marks.

The title of Las Vegas-based Gig Depio’s painting “Bridge the Gap” reflects another “Tilting the Basin” goal: bridging the gap between Northern and Southern Nevada.

“ ‘Tilting the Basin’ is all about setting cliques and politics aside, and a merging of efforts between our two major art communities in Nevada,’ ” Depio says. “Because Nevada artists make do with little resources and recognition outside our local arts community ... it is this very struggle that keeps us on our toes.”

While putting “Tilting the Basin” together, Northrup and Quinn made more than 50 studio visits to choose the 100-plus works by 34 artists.

Initially, Northrup had suggested that Quinn curate a small exhibit focusing on one Las Vegas artist — until NMA executive director David Walker asked, “ ‘Are there at least 10 really good artists in Nevada?’ ”

The “Tilting the Basin” answer: a resounding “yes.”

Las Vegas-based JW Caldwell, represented by the theater lobby mural “Time Heals All Wounds,” hopes “Tilting the Basin” will “help to show the art world that beautiful, thoughtful, playful and important art is being made in our state. It’s not just miles of desert punctuated by bright lights.”

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:

Artist and Public Opening — 7-10 p.m. Thursday; the public is invited to view the exhibit and meet artists and curators

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

Educator Open House — 5 p.m. March 22

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)