

Main Exhibition Text:

The great state of Nevada sits on the periphery of mainstream creative culture. As such it is a place where radical experimentation is possible, where artists must work (for better or worse) “under the radar.” It is home to indigenous rock art masterpieces and historically significant Land Art projects such as Michael Heizer’s *Double Negative* (1969-70). Eighty-five percent of the state’s land sits under federal jurisdiction, and the desert and mountain topography is host to military training sites. Ranching, mining, and gaming industries have a major impact on the land and its people.

While the environment might seem inhospitable to some, artists manage to thrive and are creating work that demands to be seen. Exhibition co-curators JoAnne Northrup (Reno) and Michele Quinn (Las Vegas) have surveyed the most accomplished work being created in the state today. They selected thirty-four artists living and working in Nevada to represent the strength, diversity, and complexity of contemporary art in the entire region. *Tilting the Basin* demonstrates that disparate but equally powerful creative communities have taken root in the state. This exhibition seeks to cultivate these creative voices, with a secondary goal of using art to bridge what some consider to be a divide between northern and southern Nevada communities.

The distinct personality of Nevada, informed equally by nature and culture, has seeped into the work in this exhibition. Light, both the high-pitched colored neon lights of the Strip and the reflective light of the desert’s expanse, infuses much of the work as well. The fragility, exploitation, and objectification of the human body is another recurring theme. Regardless of what drives contemporary artists to live and work in the vast, unapologetic state of Nevada, their work is worthy of both our attention and gratitude.

Quote:

The Great Basin is an interior drainage that has mostly been underwater for millennia, its ancient lakes leaving a series of wave-cut terraces around the terrain like bathtub rings. The water is now gone, but there’s a rising tide of culture in the Basin, and one way you judge the amount and quality of water in a vessel is by tilting it to assay the contents.

- William L. Fox, Director, Center for Art + Environment, Nevada Museum of Art