

GALEN BROWN: SINE CERE

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “sincere” was first recorded in English in the 1530s, and is from the Latin word *sincerus*, meaning “clean, pure, sound, etc.” Artist Galen Brown creates drawings and mixed media sculpture that embody the adjective and resonate with intelligence and formal beauty. This exhibition takes a retrospective view of the artist’s work from the 1990s to the present, highlighting process-based bodies of work—including his massive drawings on scrap museum board, which he assembles over the course of many years. Brown’s painstaking and often obsessive practice results in works that demonstrate his commitment to erasing the boundaries between art and everyday life.

Brown’s work shows the influence of Agnes Martin (1912-2004), the Canadian-born artist best known for her serene, understated, minimal paintings and drawings featuring grids, stripes, and geometric shapes. Brown and Martin share a focus on seriality, creating large bodies of related works, such as his *Circles* series of graphite drawings on scraps of salvaged four-ply museum board. Brown’s priority is to integrate artmaking with everyday life, and so he makes drawings everywhere: at the laundromat, while visiting friends, and in bed while watching television. He uses a common #2 pencil as his medium in order to limit and focus the work. Eventually some of these drawings grow quite large. *Smoulder* and *Tingle*, the largest of the *Circles* series, grew to over 125 inches in diameter, as the artist layered museum board from the center outward over the course of nearly twenty-four years.

Sponsors Maureen Mullarkey and Steve Miller

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ABOUT GALEN BROWN

Brown was born in Reno in 1959 and raised in both Reno and at King's Beach, Lake Tahoe. He was a dedicated junior ski racer on the Reno Falcons ski team and later the Lake Tahoe Ski Club, and a quiet loner in school who lacked direction until a ski accident rendered him immobile for six months. Brown began taking classes at the San Francisco Art Institute and wound up staying for the duration of his formal art education. He studied in China and New York, earning a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts in 1988 and a master's degree in 1990. After graduation he settled in West Oakland and made a living by providing art services to artists, galleries, and fine art presses in the Bay Area. He also worked as an installer at the Palo Alto Community Cultural Center (now the Palo Alto Art Center). This work evolved into a museum-quality framing business with two locations and six employees. Brown occasionally exhibited his work in group exhibitions at galleries and non-profit art spaces, but given his slow and methodical working style, he found that the framing business afforded him little time to pursue his own work. Brown resisted selling his work to collectors, preferring to keep his bodies of work together.

After twenty years in the Bay Area, Brown relocated to Carson City, Nevada, moved into his family's self-storage facility, and set up a studio and frame shop so that he would have time and space to truly focus on making art. His efforts were eventually recognized in local gallery exhibitions. A large body of his work was also featured in *Tilting the Basin*, the Nevada Museum of Art survey exhibition of contemporary artists working in the state of Nevada in 2016, and traveled to a pop-up location in Las Vegas in 2017. The quality of Brown's work was acknowledged with a Joan Mitchell Foundation artist's award in 2016.

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