Sam Shear: Outdoor Installations
Collection CAE2001

Introduction/Abstract
Artist Sam Shear builds elaborate sculptural installations, often of an ephemeral nature that question the role of religion, myth, and politics in society. Materials include models, digital images, notes and drawings, and press coverage.

Biographical Note: Sam Shear
Sam Shear, who lives at Las Tahoe where he directs the Moon Music & Art Festival and is the Marketing Manager at the Crystal Bay Casino, earned his MFA at Sierra Nevada College.

Scope and Content
Shear builds elaborate sculptural installations, often of an ephemeral nature that question the role of religion, myth, and politics in society.

In 2017, Shear installed Fallen Barn at UC Berkeley's Sagehen Creek Field Station as his MFA project? It was his second project at Sagehen, the first being a large to-scale installation of a collapsing barn, a typically favorite subject of landscape painters. He positioned the barn near a group of pine trees into which he placed a picture frame. Shear hired a plein air painter to sit between the frame and the barn and paint the scene, thus creating a comment upon the creation of landscape.

In 2018 he created and installed the Upside Down Church a 1/20 (7′ tall) scale replica of a 19th century Midwest style church, pulled, upside down by 1/3 (2′ tall) scale figures of the artist next to a 19th-century tailings pile in Virginia City, NV. The installation represented the personal, visceral experience Sam had during his Grandmother’s funeral service. “The piece is a depiction of the stress and weight put on individuals caused by religious viewpoints, greed, power, stature or political stance. Through scale and perception with an American pastoral landscape backdrop, the Upside Down Church conjures thoughts of decay, wear, commitment and contribution. The construction of four walls, a roof, and a steeple represents the purpose of bringing the community together under a spiritual advisor. Churches are places where people come together and form community bonds. They are a spiritual home, a place of communion and divine intervention. These qualities make abandoned and forsaken churches all the more gloomy and unnatural. The deep trench or rift that trails the church is a metaphor for life and as described in the defects above. The trench is the accumulation of the impact on the individuals around everyone.”

In 2019, Shear repurposed some of Upside Down Church’s materials to create Westward Expansion, a sculpture installed at the UC Berkeley Sagehen Creek Research Station, this church (right side up, this time) is being pulled by smaller figures seemingly down into the earth itself. He saw this as a critique of Manifest Destiny.

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This archive is in process.