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**PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANNA IRELAND POETICALLY CAPTURE THE NEVADA WORKS OF ARCHITECT PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS**

Janna Ireland on the Architectural Legacy of Paul Revere Williams in Nevada

Organized by the Nevada Museum of Art and presented in partnership with the Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas
December 3, 2022 – May 30, 2023

Las Vegas, Nev. (September 21, 2022) – Nicknamed “Architect to the Stars,” Paul Revere Williams (1894-1980) was the first licensed African American architect to work in the western region of the United States. Among his client list were Frank Sinatra, Cary Grant, and E.L. Cord, and he is associated with several architectural icons of Los Angeles including the Beverly Hills Hotel and the LAX Airport. Despite these and many other accomplishments, Williams’ work is often underrecognized, including many of his architectural contributions in Nevada. Presented by the Nevada Museum of Art and hosted at the Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas, *Janna Ireland on the Architectural Legacy of Paul Revere Williams in Nevada*, focuses on Williams’ work through the photographs of contemporary artist Janna Ireland. The exhibition is on display at the Nevada State Museum, Las Vegas from December 3, 2022 through May 30, 2023.

Since 2016, Ireland has captured Williams’ architecture from a fine arts perspective, producing photographs that highlight the intimate interior and exterior details of his buildings while bringing her own poetic response to Williams’ work. Ireland’s initial body of photographs focused on Williams’ work in Southern California. In 2021, Ireland was named a Peter E. Pool Research Fellow of the Center for Art + Environment of the Nevada Museum of Art, a fellowship which supports the study and photography of Williams’ Nevada work. These photographs are on view for the first time in the exhibition.

To explore Williams’ work in Nevada is to recognize the breadth of his creative range and to examine a transformational era in the state’s history. Spanning the 1930s and 1940s, Williams’ work is related to the growth of Nevada’s distinctive culture and economy, including its development into a divorce capital, tax haven,

and national tourist destination. Brought to the state by wealthy clients and important commissions, Williams made permanent contributions to the landscape through projects that include private residences, apartments and public housing, a church, and a motel, plus designs for a monorail system and unbuilt resort.

Williams' architectural body of work in Nevada is examined from two unique perspectives on opposing sides of the state. A Williams was first introduced to Nevada by Luella Garvey who commissioned him to design her home in the Northern part of the State in 1934. Other residential and lodging properties in northern Nevada designed by Williams include the El Reno Apartments in Reno, the Lovelock Inn and Tharpe Residence in Lovelock. It is important to recognize that wealthy clients engaged a Black architect during this period, and it has been suggested that they sought him out not only because they admired his work but possibly because hiring him would demonstrate their liberal values and support of racial equality.

Yet, it was in Las Vegas and its surrounding environs where Williams would design works that demonstrate his commitment to community service and equality. Williams believed that everyone deserved a dignified place to live and his work on public housing projects became a professional focus. In southern Nevada (and contrary to his projects in the North), Williams responded to the need for public housing when designing Berkley Square—the first African American suburban community in Las Vegas. The project remains the first subdivision in Nevada history constructed by a Black architect for the Black community and continues to be an important piece of historic Westside Las Vegas. Other prominent buildings include Carver Park, Guardian Angel Cathedral, the Royal Nevada Casino (no longer extant) and the iconic La Concha Motel (now part of the Neon Museum).

Built in 1961, the La Concha Motel features a graceful curvilinear form that echo the details—arched entries, staircases, and ceilings—of the residencies that Williams designed in Southern California. Often described as an example of Googie-style architecture, it was inspired by the sleek futurism of the Space Age and Atomic Age. It's no surprise that the La Concha Motel became a favorite destination of the rich and famous, including Elizabeth Taylor, Ronald Reagan, Wayne Newton, Elvis, Ann-Margret, Flip Wilson and the Carpenters.

Williams' architectural contributions collectively helped to redefine the built environment of the Western region. Some of his most iconic structures are in Southern California including the Music Corporation of America (MCA) Headquarters Building and the renovation of the Beverly Hills Hotel. He was deeply involved in the design of the master plan for the LAX Airport in association with William L. Pereira and Associates. Other celebrity clients include Barbara Stanwyck, Bill "Mr. Bojangles" Robinson and William Holden.

Carmen Beals, Associate Curator and Outreach Director of the Nevada Museum of Art said, "Despite a career that spanned over 50 years and realized more than 3,000 buildings, Williams' contributions to Nevada's architectural legacy have not been fully recognized. Through the photographs of Janna Ireland, Williams' many contributions to the architectural landscape of Nevada can now be known. We are proud to present his vision to those who may not know the work of this important Black architect."

In 1923, Williams became the first black member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Yet, even at the height of his career, Williams wasn't always welcome in the buildings he designed or the neighborhoods where he built homes because of his race. In 2017, nearly 40 years after his death, he became the first black recipient of the AIA Gold Medal.

Ireland was born in Philadelphia in 1985 and lives and works in Los Angeles, California. She holds an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles and her work has been presented in several solo and group exhibitions around the world. Her work has been acquired to the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the California African American Museum of Los Angeles, CA, and the Museum of Contemporary Photography of Chicago, IL.

This exhibition is organized by the Nevada Museum of Art and curated by Carmen Beals.

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The Nevada Museum of Art is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the statewide institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally-recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Great Basin Native Artists Archive, Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, and Trevor Paglen's *Orbital Reflector*. Learn more at nevadaart.org.

Land Acknowledgement

The Nevada Museum of Art is located in the Great Basin on the occupied territories of Indigenous people. The state of Nevada consists of 28 federally recognized tribes from four nations: the *Numu* (Northern Paiute), *Newe* (Western

Shoshone), *Wa She Shu* (Washoe), and *Nuwu* (Southern Paiute). We acknowledge that more can be done to further research and integrate the stories of Indigenous people and cultures into our collective knowledge of the lands of this place.