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NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART DEBUTS *CENTURIES OF THE BRISTLECONE*, A PERMANENT AND MONUMENTAL ARTWORK TO MEASURE TIME

Reno, Nev. (June 23, 2025) — In an age dominated by atomic clocks and digital precision, the Nevada Museum of Art invites visitors to consider a different kind of time—one rooted in the slow, patient rhythms of nature. *Centuries of the Bristlecone*, a visionary thought experiment conceptualized by experimental philosopher and conceptual artist Jonathon Keats, introduces an 11-foot-tall dual pendulum clock that keeps time by tracking the growth of the oldest living complex organisms on Earth, the bristlecone pine trees of Nevada’s Great Basin.

Commissioned by the Nevada Museum of Art and developed in partnership with clockmakers Phil Abernethy, Brittany Nicole Cox, and The Long Now Foundation, *Centuries of the Bristlecone* melds art and science. A decade in the making, the clock fuses traditional clockmaking with climate science, sculpture, conceptual art, and Nevada’s changing ecological conditions. *Centuries of the Bristlecone* is a centerpiece of the Museum’s new *Charles and Stacie Mathewson Education + Research Center*.

Unlike any clock before it, *Centuries of the Bristlecone* showcases two different concepts of timekeeping. The left side marks Coordinated Universal Time: the minutes and hours that structure modern life. The right side operates on what the artist calls “Bristlecone Time,” an entirely new system calibrated to the annual growth rings of Great Basin Bristlecone Pines atop Mount Washington in Eastern Nevada. These trees grow slowly and irregularly in response to environmental conditions, meaning that Bristlecone Time may drift - sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically - from the time indicated on standard clocks.

Alongside the clock, a related land-based art installation marks the growth of trees in The Long Now Foundation’s Nevada Bristlecone Preserve high atop Mount Washington in Eastern Nevada’s Snake Range: a living calendar made with brass survey markers embedded in the landscape, marking the growth of Bristlecone Pines over the next five millennia. *Centuries of the Bristlecone* invites audiences to consider sustaining life on Earth calibrated by the trees.

“This highly innovative project perfectly embodies our commitment to visionary artists like Jonathon Keats that blend art and science to amplify environmental awareness,” said David B. Walker, CEO of the Nevada Museum of Art. “We are grateful to our friends at The Long Now Foundation for their generous collaboration to help us realize this provocative artwork.”

“This is a clock that asks us to reimagine our sense of time,” added Jonathon Keats. “By ceding temporal authority to ancient trees, we reframe time as ecological rather than industrial. Bristlecone Time challenges us to live in deeper synchrony with our planet.”

With lifespans approaching 5,000 years, Great Basin Bristlecone Pines are environmental stewards and historians. Their growth rings track annual cycles but vary with changes in climate. If time is measured in terms of girth, greater growth will advance Bristlecone Time more quickly, which means theoretically, rising CO₂ levels could make it appear to be the year 3500 when your smartwatch reads 3127. The discrepancy prompts visitors to consider how human actions shape planetary rhythms and vice versa.

The movement of *Centuries of the Bristlecone* is driven by dual pendulums and finely crafted mechanisms designed, engineered, and fabricated by horologists Phil Abernethy and Brittany Cox. One pendulum measures time by the second; the other marks the passage of time based on data from the trees periodically collected by University of Nevada, Reno researchers Scotty Strachan and Adam Csank. A life-size image of a Great Basin Bristlecone Pine tree is installed behind the clock, based on a photograph by the artist and photographer Ian van Coller.

Colin M. Robertson, Charles N. Mathewson Senior Vice President of Education and Research, emphasized the educational value of the project: “We hope visitors will leave with a renewed sense of curiosity and reverence for the natural world. *Centuries of the Bristlecone* invites us all to become students of deep time and think carefully of the future.”

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ABOUT THE NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART

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 was designed by architect Will Bruder. The four-level, 120,000 square foot building is inspired by geological formations in Northern Nevada and is a visual metaphor for the institution's scholarly focus on art and environment. The Museum's permanent collections are divided into thematic focus areas including the Art of the Greater West, the Altered Landscape, contemporary art, and work ethic in American art.

The Museum's Center for Art + Environment is an internationally recognized research center that supports the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their natural, built, and virtual environments. The Center houses significant archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents.

Learn more at nevadaart.org.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the Wašičiw (Washoe), Numu (Northern Paiute), Neue (Western Shoshone), and Nuwu (Southern Paiute) people of the Great Basin. This includes the 28 Tribal Nations that exist as sovereign nations and continue as stewards of this land. We appreciate the opportunity to live and learn on these Indigenous homelands.