AT ANY TIME
LEARN MORE

LIFE

Nevada Museum of Art exhibit explores time seen by the bristlecone pine

Carla Sacrapano
Reno Gazette Journal
Mar 15, 2022 at 5:00 a.m. PT

Advertisement

0:00 / 0:00

Beautiful scenes of nature around Nevada and Lake Tahoe

RGJ photographer Jason Bean shares scenic photos from the Reno/Tahoe region and beyond.

Who knows more about time than one of the oldest living organisms on Earth?

In western society, time is measured by human constructs. However, a new permanent installation at the Nevada Museum of Art aims to make people aware of the other perceptions of time that exist in the world.

"It's a strange instrument," said Jonathan Keats, the experimental philosopher that worked with sculptural clockmaker Phil Abernathy and specialized mechanic Brittany Cox to create *Centuries of the Bristlecone*. "I hope that it remains strange. I hope that it helps to keep us to continually estrange us from the conditions that we are creating."

Centuries of the Bristlecone is a clock that tells time according to the growth of the bristlecone pines on Mount Washington in the Great Basin National Park in eastern Nevada. The trees are some of the oldest living things on Earth. The clock also tells time according to humans, comparing the two different perceptions of the world. Keats said people may have become unaware of the slower time scale because of the modern constructs people have made for themselves.

Advertisement
cdcresearch
Highest Rated PPC Agency
Portfolio Site Audit
For phones and tablets
LEARN MORE

"We filter out so much that we live in insulated homes," Keats said about people's perception of nature. "We do all that we can to achieve comfort, all of which is good, but it also leads to a numbing, to a dulling of the immediate and the local."

Read a news break? Check out the all new PLAY hub with puzzles, games and more!

Here's a closer look at what visitors to the Nevada Museum of Art can expect when going to see *Centuries of the Bristlecone*.

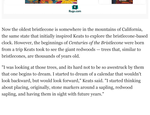
Visitors walk through the installation of "Centuries of the Bristlecone" at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Nevada on March 10, 2022. (Photo: Provided By The Nevada Museum of Art)

The oldest living organisms on Earth

Bristlecone pines are the oldest living on the planet that can be accurately measured. Though animals such as the glass sponges in Antarctica are estimated to be much older, they are not measured to the accuracy that bristlecone pines are.

Centuries of the Bristlecone bases its time off of the bristlecone pines in the grove on Mount Washington in the Great Basin National Park. That same park used to be home to the oldest bristlecone pine before it was cut down (though it was on Wheeler Peak, not Mount Washington).

Advertisement



Now the oldest bristlecone is somewhere in the mountains of California, the same state that initially inspired Keats to explore the bristlecone-based clock. However, the beginnings of *Centuries of the Bristlecone* were born from a trip Keats took to see the giant redwoods — trees that, similar to bristlecones, are thousands of years old.

"I was looking at those trees, and its hard not to be so awestruck by them that one begins to dream. I started to dream of a calendar that wouldn't look backward, but would look forward," Keats said. "I started thinking about placing, originally, stone markers around a sapling, redwood sapling, and having them in sight with future years."

Advertisement
reno gazette journal
Discover the NEW eNewspaper
LEARN MORE

Keats said the goal of his project was to de-center us as human in terms of time and timekeeping, ultimately changing the way people recognize their time as a matter of their experience of the world. "which is a world that we are very much impacting in terms of, for instance, climate change and just carbon dioxide levels," Keats said.

Keats then approached the College of the Redwoods about his idea.

Advertisement

"Before I could say 'redwood,' they said 'bristlecone,' And immediately I knew that was the right answer," Keats said. "That was the right tree to begin with, not to end with ... because of the extraordinary lifespan of those trees and because they're just such profound organisms in terms of how they take us outside of ourselves."

Through his decade worth of work with the bristlecones on Mount Washington, discussions with stakeholders like the Nevada Museum of Art and The Long Now Foundation — which describes itself as a nonprofit focused on long-term thinking and responsibility — as well as other artists, the *Centuries of the Bristlecone* was born.

Advertisement

Bristlecone Pine Tree at Wheeler Peak in Great Basin National Park. Tomasz. Jastrzebowski. Getty Images/iStockphoto

Clocks based on nature

Centuries of the Bristlecone is not the only project Keats has worked on that explores the relationship between perception, authority and environment.

Keats has explored another environmental timekeeping system with the Anchorage Museum. That one is based on glacial rivers' ratio of the historical flow rate to the current flow rate, which varies from moment to moment, from season to season, and from year to year with climate change, potentially speeding up then slowing down as the Earth warms. That work operates as a digital clock.

Advertisement

"We did a projection on the Anchorage Museum for time as well, and had many people look at it and say, the clock's wrong," Keats said. "And then after that double take, it was really interesting way in which to bring people to thinking about how we think about time and also how we think about rivers and how we think about our lives amongst others."

The river time was showcased in other artworks as well. In an effort to make the time perception flip more palpable, the river time was used as the tempo for a string quartet performance of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons."

Keats also explores "deep time" using pinhole cameras placed in various places across the West that are meant to show the change areas will experience over the next 10,000 years. One of the cameras overlooks Sand Harbor State Park at Lake Tahoe.

The pinhole cameras are created using a black piece of paper placed on the back of a can with a pinhole at the front. Long exposures to light eventually creates an image. Think of how an object left in the sun, so long that the shape of the object is left in the sun, is permanently produced with pinhole cameras show structures that are constant and unmoving the element, with the gradual changes appearing plantlike-like, and fast-paced objects, like cars or people, not showing up at all.

Calibration of the bristlecone by Jonathan Keats is collaborated with Phil Abernathy and Brittany Cox. Photo by Alex Gibson, 2020. Photo Via Gibson, 2020. Provided By The Nevada Museum of Art

How to learn more about *Centuries of the Bristlecone*

Keats will be giving a talk at the Nevada Museum of Art about the concept of time and environmental complexities that led to the concept and creation of *Centuries of the Bristlecone* from a 6-7:30 p.m. on Friday, March 4.

Advertisement

Teachers can enjoy the talk for free, general admission costs $15, students pay $13, and members get in for free. Purchase tickets online and buy tickets at nevadaart.org.

The Nevada Museum of Art is located at 160 W. Liberty Street.

Advertisement
AVAILABLE NOW!
Winter Olympics kids hardcover book
SHOP TODAY
USA TODAY SPORTS

More Stories

Man in Lyon County dies during a physical altercation with a sheriff's deputy, prosecutor's inquiry
Crime

Lake Tahoe avalanche: A Sunday snowstorm, 7 skiers still missing
News

Mexico's Problems Begin Long Before Reaching the Southern Frontier - Are They Our Problem?
Pro Mexico | Sponsored Links

We're always working to improve your experience. Let us know what you think.

Tailored to you.
Mercedes-Benz

FLY OUT OF NEW YORK/NEWARK.
Nonstop service to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland
Book Now
UNITED

Don't Mentalize Crazy Now! Dr. Phil Says Do This Moment Your Ex-Husband Has Ventured
Dr. Phil | Sponsored Links

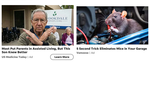
Costco Shoppers Say This $20 Item Is Worth Every Penny
Wealthy | Sponsored Links

Side Sleepers Get Achy Shoulders, Doctor Says This Pillow Stops Pain
Sleep Organic Featherlux | Sponsored Links

Memory Garden Begins When Dr. Phil Says Do This Moment Your Ex-Husband Has Ventured
Dr. Phil | Sponsored Links

Neuropathy Has Been Linked To Low Vitamin B12 Levels. Do This!
Ad Health Research Institute on Medical Health Sponsored Links

Shoulder Pain Is Not Fun. Do This Every Night. (Stop Pain In Real Time)
Health Headline | Sponsored Links



Shop Japanese Tiny Tiles Japanese Tiles (It's Amazing)
Japanese Tiles | Sponsored Links

Walking shoes for elderly with poor balance
Healthdaily | Sponsored Links

Most Pet Owners In Deerfield Living Not This New Home Before
Off Deerfield Trailer Sales | Sponsored Links

5 Second Trick Eliminates Mice in Your Garage
Rentokil | Sponsored Links

Learn More

Advertisement
Shelly 2025 Ford Mustang GT Premium Fastback
Shelly Ford Lincoln
Shop Now

© www.renogazette.com. All rights reserved.

Our 2026 LEA Coupe
LEARN MORE