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Art and Cultural Participation in Nevada

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Come live with me and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggy mountains yield.

There will we sit upon the rocks
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

(Christopher Marlow, from The Passionate Shepherd to His Love)

Introduction

On October 31, 1864 the Nevada Territory entered the Union as the 36th state. Because this official designation or recognition took place during the height of the American Civil War, it seemed appropriate to officials that the state motto “Battle Born” be adopted. Over the years the area of land known as Nevada has been called by such interesting and divergent names as Sierra Nevada Territory; Washoe Territory; Carson Territory; Eastern Slope Territory; Humboldt Territory; Esmeralda Territory; Sierra Plata Territory; Oro Plata; and Bullion. Shortly after becoming a state, Nevada adopted two nicknames: the Silver State and the Sagebrush State. Imbued within these various names one will find a rich and fascinating history of life and events that have shaped the cultural landscape we affectionately call Nevada.

The meaning of the Spanish word Nevada is snow-covered. But long before the Spanish inhabited this region of North America, there were cultural remains of what many consider the first inhabitants of Nevada, specifically the Anasazi (The Ancient Ones). Although very little of the Anasazi physical community has survived the ravages of time, they did succeed in leaving behind a strong visual record of their culture in the form of their artwork – petroglyphs. Dating back as far as ca. 18,000 B.C., the petroglyph sites scattered throughout Nevada are the beginning of a rich and productive cultural
expression that continues to define Nevada as a valuable and vibrant resource of aesthetic expression.

**Historical Overview**

“First” Threads of Territorial Nevada’s Cultural History

In 1825, Peter Skene Ogden lead the Snake River expedition into the lands that constitute Nevada. Ogden is generally recognized as the first “white” man in Nevada.

Jedediah Strong Smith leads an expeditionary force, representing the fur trapping company Smith, Jackson, and Sublette, through the Virgin Valley. This route would become the famous right-of-way “Old Spanish Trail. This route would be used extensively from 1829 to 1848. The Jedediah Smith journal and map chronicling these experiences have never been found.

Antonio Armijo, a Santa Fe merchant, led a large expeditionary party along the Old Spanish Trail and sent out scouting parties to find a shortcut to Los Angeles. His scouts discovered the artesian spring waters in the desert areas of Southern Nevada. Armijo called this region of the Old Spanish Trail “The Meadows” which today is Las Vegas. Travelers to Los Angeles no longer had to move around the vast desert thanks to the artesian waters thus shortening the trip.

In the Winter of 1833-34, Captain John C. Fremont led a small party along an area of Northern Nevada and northeast of present day Reno. The area possessed a magnificent lake that reminded Fremont of the Great Pyramid of Cheops. Fremont named the lake Pyramid in honor of Egypt’s great funeral monument. The famed frontiersman Kit Carson was hired by Fremont to help with the tracking and path finding. Fremont and Carson discovered Lake Tahoe as well.

The Bartleson-Bidwell party, emigrating from Independence Missouri in 1841 to the promise of the West, passed through Nevada by way of Humboldt, Carson Sink, and Walker River. The Bartleson-Bidwell party is generally considered the earliest organized group of
immigrants to pass through Nevada. Two years later, Joseph Walker led the first wagons across the Sierras that would be used by the gold seekers into California after 1849.

The Winter of 1846 witnessed the Donner party leave the safety and security of the Truckee Meadows too late in the season to safely cross the Sierra Nevadas and, as a consequence, was trapped by an unseasonably heavy snowfall near Hastings Cutoff. Of the original 87 members of the Donner party, only 47 were fortunate to survive (reportedly due to random acts of cannibalism).

The beginning of the non-Indian settlement in the Great Basin of North America began in 1847 with the movement of Mormons to the fertile Salt Lake Valley.

The Truckee River and Meadows became an oasis watering hole for the weary travelers along the California Trail after James Marshall’s discovery of gold at Sutter’s sawmill along the South Fork of the American River. Tens of thousands would cross the Great Basin and Sierra Nevada to California in the hopes of securing a quick fortune. In quick succession, the United States acquired a vast expanse of land, part of the Nevada territories, in February 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Brigham Young, the Territorial Governor and leader of the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City, oversaw the Utah Territory, which was established by the United States Congress in 1850. This vast expanse of land encompassed what is now the states of Utah, Idaho, and Nevada.

The first recorded discovery of gold in the Nevada territories took place in 1851 in Gold Canyon (now called Dayton).

In June 1855, William Bringhusrt and Oscar Hamblin led a small group of 30 men to establish a Mormon colony in the Las Vegas valley. They built a small 150 square foot adobe brick fort known as Mormon Fort. This fort would help establish supply lines along the Old Spanish Trail and would also assist in converting the Native Americans. Portions of this structure are still standing making it the oldest surviving structure in Nevada. The harsh desert environment
was too much for the Mormon colony and, in less than three years, the supply and missionary effort was largely abandoned by the end of 1858.

The first printed newspaper in Nevada was the Territorial Enterprise, which began operation in December 1858 in Genoa.

During a constitutional convention in July 1859 at Genoa, Isaac Roop was elected Governor of the Utah Territory. Shortly afterwards, the fabled Comstock Lode was discovered 40 miles from the Truckee Meadows. Virginia City springs up seemingly overnight.

By 1860 the Pony Express begins to pass through Nevada regularly. The riders would average about 33 miles a day and could cover the 2000 miles from St. Joseph Missouri to Sacramento, California in around 10 days.

On March 2, 1861, by an Act of Congress, President James Buchanan signed a document separating Nevada from the Utah Territory and the region achieved independent territorial status. The Nevada Territory motto that was adopted was "Volens et Potens" (Willing and Able). The New Yorker James Warren Nye became the first and only Territorial Governor of Nevada through an appointment made by President Abraham Lincoln. The first Nevada Territorial Legislature met on November 25, 1861 in Carson City. Nevada’s Territorial population was estimated to be 14,404 people.

In 1862 Colonel P. E. Conner establishes a military Camp Ruby in the Nevada Territory and helps recruit over 1100 men for Civil War service to the Union cause.

On October 31, 1864 Nevada becomes the 36th state in the Union. Henry Goode Blasdel was the first elected Governor of Nevada. He served in this capacity from 1864 to 1871.

**Cultural Opportunities in Northern Nevada**

Citizens and visitors to the State of Nevada are fortunate to experience an abundance of world-class amenities in recreation, events, the arts and culture. Northern Nevada, especially the
metropolitan area around Reno/Sparks/Lake Tahoe, possesses awe-inspiring natural beauty within a highly desired four-season climate. Situated along the eastern slopes of the spectacular Sierra Nevada range, the famed Truckee Meadows Valley offers unsurpassed skiing, fishing, sailing, swimming, hiking, biking, and camping activities year round. Third in population behind Las Vegas and Henderson, Reno is the governing seat of Washoe County. Reno is sited 22 miles northeast of Lake Tahoe and 26 miles north of the Nevada state capital Carson City.

Pioneers began settling in the Truckee Meadows as early as the 1850’s. The Truckee Meadows fertile valley is fed by the Truckee River, which courses its way from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake. The Reno settlement in the Truckee Meadows initially started as subsistence farming but the fortunes of the city were quickly magnified with the discovery of gold in Northern California and silver thanks to the Comstock Lode of 1859. Thanks to the arrival of the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific railroads, Reno officially came into being on May 13, 1868. Reno enjoyed another economic boost when the Virginia and Truckee Railroad arrived in town in 1872. Virginia City, Tonopah, and Goldfield vied with Reno for power and influence. In 1871, Jacob Davis, a Reno tailor, patented his copper rivet canvas pants and joined up with Levi Strauss to develop the internationally famed garment Levi’s.

Thanks to the Nevada Legislature, Reno received another economic boom in 1931 with the legalization of casino gaming. The passage of liberal divorce laws also contributed to an economic boom that still fuels part of the economy not only in Reno but also in other parts of Nevada.

The oldest university in the state is located in northern Nevada. The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) was transferred from Elko, where it had been a college preparatory school, to Reno where it quickly became a full-fledged state college. Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) is a two year regionally accredited institution addressing the higher educational needs of northern Nevada.

For a number of decades, Reno was the gambling capital of the world but that designation has moved south to Las Vegas since the
1960’s. In an effort to bring more tourists to the area, Reno hosts Hot August Night, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS05](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS05) (a classic car rally and gathering); Street Vibrations, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS08](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS08) (a motorcycle rally and fan gathering); Great Reno Balloon Race, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS07](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS07); Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-off, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS15](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS15); Reno Air Race, [http://www.airrace.org/indexJS.php](http://www.airrace.org/indexJS.php); The Reno Rodeo, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS03](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS03); and Cinco de Mayo celebration.

Located at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountain range that borders California and Nevada, Reno host reservations for three tribes: Washoe, Paiute, and Shoshone. These three tribes were dependent on hunting, fishing, and seed gathering for subsistence. Dat so la lee, a legendary basket maker, made beautiful baskets known for exceptional craftsmanship and beauty.

Another famous Native American from the Truckee Meadows valley was Sarah Winnemucca, the first Indian woman to write a book and champion education for Native Americans. Along with Dat So La Lee and Sarah Winnemucca, Sacagawea was a famous Shoshone woman from the Truckee Meadows valley region who guided and interpreted for Lewis and Clark on their great Western expedition.


Throughout the year, citizens and tourists alike gather for Hot August Nights, The Reno Rodeo, Reno National Championship Air Races, Great Reno Balloon Race, and Shakespeare at the Lake. Nighttime activities feature top entertainers headlining at numerous casinos as well as dining opportunities that rival San Francisco in some ways, located three hours away to the West.

From Eagle Valley to John C. Fremont’s Celebrated Scout

No doubt dwarfed by the reputations and sheer size of Reno and Las Vegas, Carson City does manage to intrigue visitors due to its frontier heritage. The area known as Eagle Valley had been settled by ranchers in the early 1850’s. A rich parcel of land was acquired by a number of well-connected attorneys who planned the town site and named it after John C. Fremont’s fabled scout Kit Carson. The timing for the forming of the town site that became known as Carson City was quickly followed by the discovery of the fabled Comstock Lode. Carson City immediately came to life as an important freight and transportation center servicing the expanding gold and silver mines and a staging center for the logging industry in the Lake Tahoe basin. By 1864 Carson City became Nevada’s permanent capital (having been moved from Elko) following statehood. As a result, the livelihood of Carson City was not dependent on the mines and was able to withstand economic downturns better than boom places like Goldfield and Tonopah to the south.

The arrival of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad helped solidify Carson City’s importance along the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. By 1874, the Virginia and Truckee Railroad
scheduled 36 trains a day through Carson City. A magnificent sandstone engine house and roundtable facility dominated the northeast corner of the city for over a century. Unfortunately for posterity, the imposing stone structures fell into ruin and were torn down in 1950. Many of the stones were shipped off to California and may now be found in the facades of the beautiful wineries in the Napa Valley.

Cultural highlights in Carson City include the Mother Lode architecture of the Wells, Fargo &Co. offices and depot at West King and Curry streets; the Carlson House Restaurant; the Brewery Arts Center (formerly the Carson Brewery known for its Tahoe Beer); the William Stewart House at 108 N. Minnesota (occupied by William Stewart and then James Nye, the first two U. S. Senators from the State of Nevada); the Springmeyer House at 302 N. Minnesota (home of Governor Charles Russell); the unique Victorian bird bath and six chimneys located at 212 N. Division Street; and the 1868 St. Peter’s Rectory at 300 N. Division Street.


“The Last Real Cowtown in the American West”
In 1869 Elko emerged as the railroad-promoted town site and railhead for the White Pine mines. But Elko’s importance extends beyond the mines and embraces the enormous cattle ranching empire that touches parts of four states. Lowell Thomas, the famed chronicler of a vanishing American way of life, saw Elko as the “last real cowtown in the American West.” Today, thanks to the cattle industry and the development of new mining technologies that can harvest microscopic particles of precious gold and silver, Elko is enjoying a kind of youthful urbanity. No match for Las Vegas, Henderson, or Laughlin to the south, Elko does enjoy the rich cultural Basque identity and the Western Folk life centered around the Cowboy Poetry gathering, [http://www.westernfolklife.org/site/](http://www.westernfolklife.org/site/).

Elko had the first State University for ten years (1874-1884) but the educational institution was relocated to Reno due to lack of interest (enrolled students in 1874 was 7; by 1884 enrollment figures reached 15).

Elko distinguished itself culturally with Ted Lewis’ High-Hatted Tragedian of Jazz orchestra (from 1937). Following Lewis came the likes of Sophie Tucker and Skinnay Ennis – performers who paved the way for gambling and big name entertainment in the State of Nevada. Other noteworthy cultural achievements for Elko include the celebrated saddle shop of G. S. Garcia and the successor J. M. Capriola Co. President Ronald Reagan rode a Capriola saddle as does such Hollywood celebrities as Sylvester Stallone and Harrison Ford. Elko’s General Merchandise Store on Idaho Street is another historical point of interest. The old saloon bar from Halleck, a beloved relic, is to be found in the Northeast Nevada Museum on the south side of City Park in Elko. In order to acquire this relic from the 19th century, the Northeast Nevada Museum agreed to pay rent “in the form of one bottle of Beefeater’s Gin per year, served over the bar.” Needless to say, over the years, the rent day celebration has become an annual invitation-only affair of considerable importance within the local Elko community.

**The Ghost Train and the Great City of Eastern Nevada**

Located along the Eastern portion of the State of Nevada where the Steptoe Valley meets the foothills of the Egan Range, the City of Ely
is closer to Salt Lake City than to either Reno or Las Vegas. The conjunction of Highways 6, 50 and 93 service Ely with tourists who travel via the automobile. But the big attraction that brings visitors to Ely is the famous Ghost Train, http://www.robertwynn.com/Ghosttrain.htm. Built in 1906, the Nevadan Northern railroad connected the pit mines in Ruth with the smelter located at McGill Ranch. Railroad aficionados from all over the world flock to Ely to ride the Ghost Train to McGill-Cherry Creek.

Established in the 1870s, Ely was initially a stagecoach station and post office. By 1887 Ely had been designated the White Pine County seat. The city services the mining camps of Ward, Cherry Creek, Osceola, Ruth and Taylor. Immense copper deposits were discovered at the beginning of the 20th century that helped diversify Ely’s economy. The Kenne3cott Copper Company came into being and exerted enormous influence over the direction of this Eastern portion of Nevada.

In addition to the famed Ghost Train, Ely is also an important destination for the Great Basin National Park, http://www.greatbasinfoundation.org/. Those visitors seeking hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, exploring, and cross-country skiing converge on Ely as the point of entry into the magnificent surroundings

Choosing to be a resident of Nevada for the past twenty-three years, I recognized in the early ‘80s that Northern Nevada may have a lock on the famed history of the Silver State but the present, that spirit of Christopher Marlow’s “Passionate Shepherd to His Love” referenced earlier, is decidedly found in abundance in the environs encompassing Clark County.

Saco Rienk Deboer, the City That Built Hoover Dam, and the Legacy of Beauty

Boulder City came into being as a center for housing workers who were engaged in The Boulder Canyon Project. The city was laid out by landscape architect Saco Rienk DeBoer for the Bureau of Reclamation. Born in Ureterp, Netherlands, Saco DeBoer immigrated to the United States in 1908 where he distinguished
himself as a landscape architect and city planner through a close collaboration with George Kessler and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. In addition to laying out Boulder City, DeBoer’s design aesthetic touched the Colorado contours of Denver, Greeley, Grand Junction, Boulder, Golden, Longmont, Aurora, and Fort Collins.

DeBoer’s vision and design acumen reached well beyond Colorado and Nevada though. The Cities of Scottsbluff, Nebraska; Brainerd, Minnesota; Ruidoso, New Mexico; Idaho Falls, Idaho; and Glendive, Montana have all been touched by his advanced concern for ecological awareness, humanized living spaces, and beauty. DeBoer writes in his 1972 memoir: “We must not stop in our planning for beauty. Our trees and parks must be renewed constantly if we are to leave a decent world for those who follow us. Now is the time to plan that world. The city grows so fast that it will soon be too late if the opportunities for making it beautiful are not grasped now.”

Boulder City is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/, and claims to be the first “planned community” in America. Boulder City operates the first city airport in Nevada to take visitors on aerial tours of the majestic Grand Canyon, http://www.nps.gov/grca/, as well as Hoover Dam and Lake Mead (the world’s deepest man-made lake), http://www.a2zlasvegas.com/otherside/sights/hoover.html.

Originally alcohol sales and all forms of gambling were prohibited within the Boulder City limits. The Bureau of Reclamation relinquished control of the city in 1958. Alcohol sales were permitted within Boulder City in 1969 but the city charter continues to prohibit gambling. Boulder City is the only location in Nevada where gambling is illegal. Boulder City is the third largest city in Nevada by area even though the charter maintains strict control on growth. The principle cultural points of interest in Boulder City include Hoover Dam, Lake Mead, and the Alan Bible Botanical Garden, http://www.nearctica.com/organize/institut/nativep.htm.

A More Family-Friendly Venue

Forsaking the greater glitz and adult orientated entertainment of Las Vegas or Reno, Don Laughlin and his Riverside Resort and
Casino sought to capture a different market share. Born in Owatonna, Minnesota, Don Laughlin’s vision for an alternative destination for visitors to Southern Nevada has emerged as the third most visited casino and resort destination in Nevada. Located across the Colorado River from Bullhead City, Arizona, Laughlin is 94 miles south of Las Vegas. With a greater emphasis on outdoor and family activities, Laughlin has attracted a curious blend of older, retired Americans seeking a quieter gaming destination than offered by Las Vegas and those who enjoy the thrill of the motorcycle ride. Tens of thousands of motorcyclists descend on Laughlin for the famed River Run (April). In addition to the River Run, Laughlin also hosts the annual Talent Quest National Finals, where singers compete for the top Male and Female spot in Pop/Rock/R&B/Country Western.

**Csi: Henderson**

Competing with its neighbor Las Vegas five miles to the northwest, Henderson boasts an estimated population of 250,000 (2006). Henderson received its city charter from the State Legislature in 1965 establishing a Council/Manager form of local government. The bedroom communities that have grown up in Henderson, epitomized by the high end residential developments of Green Valley, Anthem and MacDonald Ranch, are frequently used by CSI directors as featured backdrops for the top rated TV drama CSI: Las Vegas.

In addition to being featured on national television, other points of cultural interest in Henderson include the Ethel M. Botanical Cactus Gardens, Green Valley Ranch, Fiesta Henderson, and Henderson Pavilion. The Meadows
Although the exact date is not known, Rafael Rivera is recognized as the first non-Indian to set foot in the oasis-like valley that today is known as Las Vegas. Between 1830 and 1848, the artesian spring water that was plentiful in the greater Las Vegas region helped shorten and ease the travel rigors for traders and those seeking the California gold rush along the Spanish Trail to Los Angeles. John C. Fremont led an overland expedition west to California and stopped in Las Vegas Springs on May 13, 1844. Fremont’s name is immortalized in neon and along a primary artery in downtown Las Vegas but you would be hard pressed to find references to Rafael Rivera.

The San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad (absorbed later by the Union Pacific) arrived in Las Vegas in 1905 and became an important stop facility. It is worth noting that the Plaza Hotel, located in the old downtown section of Las Vegas, is the only site in the world where passenger trains still use the depot site for a railroad station, which is actually located in a hotel casino.

Thanks to the Northern Nevada legislator Phil Tobin and his legislative initiative legalizing gambling, Las Vegas has been insulated from economic hardships from the 1930’s Great Depression on.

Gambling opportunities were ample in Nevada in general and in Las Vegas in particular with the arrival of hotelman Tommy Hull. Opening the El Rancho Vegas Hotel-Casino in 1941, Hull paved the way for the contemporary scene of casino gaming with resort destinations. Although Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel’s Flamingo Hotel enjoyed far greater celebratory status than Hull’s first-generation Strip resort, the El Rancho and its western ranch-styled theme triggered the development of the world-famous Strip as a tourist destination. Siegel’s Flamingo was inspired by the resort hotels of Miami and Havana. Wilbur Clark soon followed Hull and Siegel with the Desert Inn (1950) and Milton Prell developed the Sahara Hotel (1952). On the heels of Clark and Prell were the Royal Nevada Dunes, Hacienda, Tropicana, Stardust, and in downtown the Fremont Hotel.
In 1955 the **Moulin Rouge Hotel-Casino** opened and catered to the minority population who were welcomed to entertain guests but could not stay in the hotels. The Moulin Rouge was frequented by all races and was welcomed through the doors by the late heavyweight champion Joe Louis (an owner-host). Louis later moved his hosting duties to **Caesars Palace** along the Strip.

In order to solidify the economic power base of the gaming industry along the Strip, casino owners marketed Las Vegas as an entertainment destination. The Stardust imported the Lido de Paris from France to great success. The Dunes followed with Minsky’s **Follies** and the Tropicana Hotel acquired the rights to the **Folies Bergere**. Entertainment icons associated with Las Vegas over the years included Don Rickles, Buddy Hackett, Shecky Greene, Alan King, Louis Prima and Keely Smith, Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack, and Elvis Presley.

During the initial years of the Las Vegas Strip, the word “NO became a kind of buzz phrase: “No Cover, No Minimum, No State Speed Limit, No Sales Tax, No Waiting Period for Marriages, No State Income Tax, and No Regulation on Gambling. The only No’s remaining today are no state income tax, no waiting period to obtain a marriage license, and in many casinos no cover charge in lounges.

The 1970’s-1980s’ saw Las Vegas being transformed by a corporate invasion that ushered in an era of Megaresorts. **Circus Circus, Mirage, Treasure Island, Bellagio, Excalibur, Luxor**, and **MGM Grand** opened their doors to the ever-growing number of tourists. These Megaresorts not only increased the number of hotel rooms available to tourists visiting Las Vegas , they also commissioned new entertainment enterprises. **Siegfried and Roy, Circue de Soleil, Blue Man Group, O**, and **Phantom** are just a few of the spectacular venues for the glamorous nightlife that has become Las Vegas.


World-class entertainers and five-star dining are featured in abundance at Las Vegas casinos and resorts lining the famed Strip. High end shopping has also become closely associated with the Las Vegas experience. Clark County also houses the Community College of Southern Nevada, Nevada State College, and the Las Vegas campus of the University of Nevada better known by its abbreviation – UNLV.

For over three decades now, Arts production and Cultural participation in the Silver State have been especially favored in Southern Nevada. The fine and performing arts are alive and well in Las Vegas!

**Dancing on the Green**

Nathaniel Hawthorne once wrote: “If cities were built by the sound of music, then some edifices would appear to be constructed by grave, solemn tones, and others to have danced forth to light fantastic airs.” It seems that Hawthorne was anticipating the
phenomenal emergence of Las Vegas as the iconic marker of the Post Modern era.

Las Vegas is more than a city. It is both an Age and an Era unto itself. Las Vegas is so powerful as an idea that its fixed ends appear both heroic and mad. And as an idea, an adult idea to be sure, Las Vegas has emerged as the physical manifestation of a nation’s unfettered conscience. We know from all the demographic statistics that Las Vegas is becoming a center of the great southwest. Arguably it stands shoulder to shoulder with Phoenix, Tucson and Santa Fe. But this sense of urban posturing is transient for Las Vegas is fulfilling its bejeweled destiny as the Eternal Eden.

As the Eternal Eden, Las Vegas is reflecting the truth of an Age. Las Vegas is not just alive, it is awake! Driving along Fremont Street or Las Vegas Boulevard (a.k.a. the Strip) at night and peering through the windshield of your protective and solitary capsule (i.e., the automobile), your physical and spiritual senses are invaded by an urban consciousness which never ceases, which never tires. As your senses emerge from and descend into stages of momentary stupor, likened possibly to the flux and reflux of water, you begin to grasp the reality that Las Vegas, as a city, never sleeps. Its electronic brain never wearies. A dreadful strain is felt, to be sure. But Las Vegas is the City of the Night. It knows no sleep. Switches may be turned off. Power sources may be cut. But the city continues to react for it is more than conscious, it is awake!

The great ring of colored lights, driven by the pulsating emanations of neon gases, lure the adventuress toward the hurling mysteries (what Robert Venturi’s students affectionately called “the great proletarian cultural locomotive”). Bathed by the sensuous pleasures of radiating chromatism, visitors to the Strip find it difficult to make fine discriminations. There is a certain warmth which is generated upon the spectator’s retinas by Vegas’ kaleidoscope of prismatic colors. Conversation between visitors is dulled and flattened in the presence of pulsating light. What the neon light doesn’t overshadow, it infects. It is an engineered illusion of constant change communicated through colored light.
A strange sensation overtakes us. A number of generations preceding ours have adjusted to the radiant glow of Mr. Edison’s incandescent light bulb. Nevertheless, the intensity and ferocity of the Strip illuminated at night shocks us. And yet, somehow, it is a familiar shock. From the Union Plaza Hotel at the foot of Fremont Street to the Tropicana and Excalibre Hotels and Mandalay Bay on the southern most portion of the Strip, night is transformed into a surreal day. Our frame of mind, bedazzled by the lights, searches for a reference point only to be repulsed by a succession of explosions spewing forth a plethora of heightened primary colors.

**The Strip**

The Strip, the primary artery nourishing Las Vegas, is actually quite shapeless. Sure, a Thomas Brothers’ map would reveal that Fremont Street and the Strip form a pseudo-T shape if viewed from above. But these arteries of life supporting the urban body which is Las Vegas are so taut, so concentrated or compacted that mere shape dissolves before the chromatic assault. We are numbed by the stultifying display of Yesco’s signage.

The Strip functions as the City’s antechamber, effectively introducing the visitor and his or her wallet to gaming. The heroic exaltation of speed and urban dynamism, once raised to a feverish level in the gestures of the Italian Futurist painter Umberto Boccioni, is still alive and well in the Las Vegas polemical neon manifesto of the post WWII era. Distortion, shapelessness and compression contribute to the retinal images of the kinetic Strip shuddering with streaming lines of force and action. Vegas Neon is addictive. It becomes, if you will, an opiate to the visual senses. For decades there has been no obsessive interest in the future that was or might be. Las Vegas exists for the moment. As a city there has been no “distorted prolongation of that old revolution.” And that was its *raison d’etre*. It seems almost contradictory that Las Vegas would have a past. The dynamism of the city precludes standing still. Everything and everyone is seemingly caught in a vortex of movement, in this magical moment of sensation.

On the Strip there is very little engagement between municipal forces and the public. Governmental anonymity blankets this artery
for twelve or more miles. This asphalt Eden engulfs you with its supercharged madness.

Yesco (a.k.a. the Young Electric Sign Company) and other sign manufacturers hired a number of talented artist-designers during the post WWII years and encouraged them to fantasize in neon light. Bigger and brighter dominated the resulting innovations in the use of the chemically inert gaseous element popularly known as neon. Yesco, more than any other signage firm, astutely absorbed the pop art culture of the ‘50s and ‘60s into Vegas’ phenomenal sub-culture of gaming and its attendant market.

The gaming sub-culture has become an acceptable popular “fashion” of expressive imagery. There is general agreement that “fashion”, as a manifestation of popular culture, is the least susceptible to stylistic limitations imposed by institutionalized dogmas and doctrines. During the ‘50s and ‘60s, this penchant for “fashion” found a fertile environment in Las Vegas.

The design activity along Freemont Street and the Strip scorned the security and certainty of civilized discourse in favor of adult-oriented fantasy. The rhythmic sensations of movement along the Strip, with its accompanying suspension of time, effectively bracketed an era which is forever arriving. The horizontal, axially radiating symmetry of Fremont Street and the Strip exists as an independent sphere of immediate yet evanescent impulses.

The visual continuity afforded by change in Las Vegas has been elevated to a level of consciousness once reserved for the icon. But the celebrated fashion for an imagery of infatuation, whim and risk has flavored the design sensibilities at work in Southern Nevada to better accommodate the seductive kineticism of motion.

An earlier marketing cliché – “Las Vegas: Always on the Money” – has been replaced by “Las Vegas: What happens here stays here”. This revised slogan is being broadcast to the world in an effort to further aesthetize a media-oriented populace, at least that portion of the population which “possesses” a television, to the “New Age” units of force which violate adult civility through commercial images dramatized with and driven by a jazz-like syntax. This particular
effort at sloganeering, and all future slogans to be sure, is charged
with an energetic theatricality to further record and report on the
“Strip’s” unique serial instants of disengaged time. The perceived
process of motion, inextricably tied to the monstrously invulnerable
machine, is a simultaneity of endurance and transformation.

**Nourishing the Adult Idea**

The most prominent architectural features found on Fremont Street
and Las Vegas Boulevard are remarkably a-referential and therefore
quite useless for spatial orientation. There exists a retinal
uncertainty which is simultaneously reflexive and pulsatingly
incoherent. The *adult idea*, the *adult image* has found a place to be
in Las Vegas. The fundamental insights offered by Las Vegas’
architectural design legacy of articulating matter in motion has not
lost its validity at the end of the twentieth century. The language,
the context, and the time of an evolving era, of an age which
is *becoming* form a complex interchange in the rhythms of
representation along these two downtown arteries.

Fremont Street and Las Vegas Boulevard are linear metaphors of
societal fragmentation. The calculated assault on the past and on
the complacent rationalism of yesterday is firmly ensconced on
these principle thoroughfares and continue to dominate the
designer’s aesthetics. The Circus Circus Clown (emblematic of the
pursuit of happiness), the Caesars Palace Centurions (enduring
symbols of past glories) and the Tropicana Tiki Heads (suggesting a
Garden of Eden and natural man) coalesce into a pastiche of
glittering vacancy mimicking our present with brutalizing palpability.
Such cross-cultural meanderings move Las Vegas’ syntax of images
forward by stepping back into referential time.

The invasion of electronic ideas upon our retinal receptors can no
more be resisted than denied. We, as members of the Western
World, are totally immersed in a culture of media reality. An
invitation has been extended to us to re-engage our perception
toward the matrix of realities forever hurling into the present.
Present time becomes the apprehending reality. Originals have no
place in such a context. Copies of copies emerge as the new syntax
of image making, as the new syntax of image building. Andre
Agassi’s *Image is Everything* campaign for Nike is *Right on the Money*.

Unlike the programmatic architecture which flourished briefly in Southern California between the two world wars, Las Vegas’ roadside architecture is reflective of a commitment to vernacular symbolism in the guise of gamesmanship. Recognizing the possibilities afforded by the proliferation of the automobile as the principle mode of travel in the West, developers of the gaming industry in Las Vegas cultivated a set of eclectic design imagery which would effectively capture the attention of motorists and press them to remember the scene. During the ‘50s the infusion of an aggressive form of salesmanship in these designs revealed a maddening sense of exuberance for sharp and startling contrasts between styles. Because the dial of theatrical flourish was seemingly turned up to a maximum pitch by the promulgation of Period Revival architecture, critics of the purist persuasion labeled Las Vegas as the purveyor of *low art*.

**Las Vegas Vernacular**

The role of design symbolism in Vegas Vernacular architecture paralleled the methods of commercial persuasion which drove the Pop Art explorations of the ‘50s and ‘60s. The phenomenon of spatial spread, experienced in Los Angeles with the unrestricted integration of the automobile into everyday life, quickly became an essential ingredient in the invention and enforcement of a Vegas Vernacular.

Casino facades were set back from Highway 91 in order to accommodate more fully the motorized gambler with an abundance of free parking. These parking lots, confined to the front and along the sides of casinos but seldom found in the back, evolved into a sacred perimeter for graphic packaging and commercial persuasion. Between Highway 91’s axial curbside and the casino’s main entrance, the motorized visitor to Las Vegas is effectively disconnected from life’s daily rituals by the chaotic differentiation of “watts, animation, and iconology.”
Along the Strip, the blank verse rhythms of Vegas Vernacular are reflected at right angles to the motorist. The enormous spatial voids created by the perimeter parking between Strip casinos read emphatically as animated sequences. Art devotees are reminded of Eadweard Muybridge’s photographs diagramming a sequence of highly disciplined physical activities or the chained imagery of Ed Ruscha’s Every Building On The Sunset Strip.

Unlike their Pop counterparts, however, designers of Vegas Vernacular worked in three dimensions. The massive facades and sides of Strip casinos are turned in such a manner as to catch the attention of the approaching motorist. The service areas and mechanical equipment of these facilities are relegated to the rear where “their ill-kept backsides” become “ruthless transitions” offending the local environment.

By concentrating so much symbolism on the façades and sides of casino structures, architects working within the Vegas Vernacular idiom effectively heated up the commercial persuasiveness of Pop Culture signage along the Strip corridor during the ’50s and ’60s. The impact of such visual inflection on the autoscape defies description – it must be seen to be experienced. This commercial proliferation of visual signage along Fremont Street and the Strip, conveyed through words of monumental scale, through animated sequencing of pictures and through neon lights imitating sculpture, overpowers and impoverishes all “traditional” means of informing the passing motorist.

Vegas Vernacular – the adult-oriented, pleasure-zone oasis cited in the seemingly hostile environment of the Mojave Desert, should be likened to the trembling oscillation of a requiem dirge celebrating the passing of a tired, worn and irreverent architectural design convention. Citizens of the Late Modern and Post Modern periods possess sensibilities which are both bruised and battered. The pace of our lives, reflecting the droning incessantness of impatience brutalized by a syntax of indulgence, is hurling toward the present time. The flourish of fantasy in Vegas Vernacular, sometimes unique and almost always startling, encourages the interjection of new programmatic devices for experiencing the built environment. The
visual language of Vegas Vernacular diverges from the innuendos of high art in favor of the inventiveness of the programmatic. The insane maneuvering of the Vegas programmatic context is meant to jar, shock and amuse. And yet, as the “sylvan quality of suburbia” is pushed aside by the wake of blatant commercialism, the calming sound of a trumpeting note may be heard. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, the noted American architectural historian and respected scholar of twentieth century design theory, made the following observation: “The combination of strict functionalism and bold symbolism in the best roadside stands promises, perhaps, the most encouraging sign for the architecture of the Mid-twentieth century.”

Subordinating Spatial Sequences

Passing through the thin veneers of casino facades, visitors immediately confront an interior space which separates them, in an exaggerated way, from the external environment. Interior circulation passes through and is focused on the gambling room. All other activities (i.e., dining, entertainment, shopping, hotel accommodations, etc.) are spatial sequences which continue to be subordinated to the gambling room.

Within the casino structure, an atmosphere of anonymity reigns supreme. The expansive low ceiling of the gambling room effectively disconnects the visitor from the previously experienced sense of limitless space perceived on the exterior. Disconnection becomes disorientation as the space/time continuum is fractured. The inclusiveness of interior closure contributes to a mental state of privacy, protection and focus – humanistic qualities ideally suited to the promotion of gambling.

But there is so much more happening in this City of Light! Light is an intriguing metaphor to associate with Las Vegas. Not only does the sun bathe Las Vegas with an abundance of natural light, artists and designers have been projecting a broad beam of light upon Las Vegas for some time now. Light, long a metaphor for knowledge and observation, has also enjoyed associations with mathematics and navigation. But Las Vegas light portends a new freedom of association capturing profound and more delicate shades of feeling. As this beam of light is focused on Las Vegas, we are finding that
artists are being lured to this city from all over the country and from many diverse parts of the world to partake of a new sense of illumination. For centuries reality lay in the realm of measurement and observation. The long split or divide between scientific truth and the imagination is slowly being reconciled with broad incursions into the realm of artistic creativity. One realm of particular interest is the notion that artists are dancing “forth to light fantastic airs”

**From Tears to Pearls**

Heinrich Heine, a 19th century German poet, once remarked: “The artist is the child in the popular fable, every one of whose tears was a pearl. Ah! The world, that cruel step-mother, beats the poor child the harder to make him shed more pearls.” Large metropolitan cities like Las Vegas remain the finest expression of civil society. These urban centers demand a great deal of cooperation from their citizenry within the context or confines of living, working, and playing in close proximity. One of the great by-products emanating from the contact zones of proximity cooperation is the releasing of positive energy which often leads to collaborative visions. And one such example of positive energy spewing forth from urban articulations may be found in the medium of dance. Strong dance, by providing a solid measure of artistic or intellectual fertility amongst the oscillations of transculturation, is the very business of democratic culture. Through its spatial choreography of memory and exile, dance gives physical form to the complex terrain and spaces of travel to a contemporary world constantly on the move. Havelock Ellis, an early 20th century English psychologist, remarked in his book *The Dance of Life*: “Dancing is the loftiest, the most moving, the most beautiful of the arts, because it is no mere translation or abstraction from life; it is life itself.”

For the general public, Las Vegas is a city known more for easy pleasures and fast action. Part of the allure and mystique associated with Las Vegas is this notion that as a post WWII City it is positioned at the center of some great matrix that continuously picks up and disposes of the latest trends and multiple trajectories of pop American culture. Money and commerce, many believe, remain the central focus here. Sin City endures, for the uninformed
and the uninitiated, as a harsh arena for garish ornamentation and the endless ringing of slot machines. And within that knowledge frame, that underscored sense of illusion, these same believers don’t expect to engage or confront the cerebral operations through which lofty ideas about beauty and culture emanate. But I submit to you Las Vegas has so matured as a value driver within the context of a tourist destination and as a place to live that it can credibly attract not just the world’s highest rollers but its most discriminating intellectuals and art patrons as well. The Vegas power brokers are now casting a wider net for tourists of all cultural backgrounds. Visitors and locals alike are realizing that Las Vegas possesses a global sense of place at the new millennial edge. Today's Las Vegas boasts some of the nation's (and perhaps the world's) most accomplished chefs, upscale shopping boutiques, marbled hotels, extravagant entertainment – a rich tapestry of sights, sounds, smells, and textures. The dazzling neon, the bright lights of the Strip, the people dressed to the nines, the big limos, the influx of big name stars coming down for frequent visits, what a time it is as the face of Las Vegas morphs itself through a series of social and cultural upheavals. Las Vegas encourages people to translate and learn across cultural divides. This fabled location, known around the world through a series of powerful images cited along the Las Vegas “Strip,” has become both a setting and a metaphor of the negotiations of cultural/cross-cultural contact. A setting and a metaphor of people finding, or failing to find in some cases, the means of survival in an increasingly complex world which does its best to minimize or mitigate their choices in real time. And that which is lost, re-gained, and transformed in the art of learning across the global sense of place has become the crucial connecting link or nexus of the Las Vegas design lab.

Cross-Cultural Engagement

If you look beyond the cash nexus though, you will begin to recognize that within the unique construct that is Las Vegas programming, a dynamic and creative model of cross-cultural engagement and advanced distributed learning have been maturing over the course of time. Perhaps like the fabulous bird of old that rises out of the burnt ashes on an altar of fire as a new, young, and
vibrant Phoenix, present day Las Vegas attracts a new breed of tourists and residents. For years people took great pleasure in condemning Sin City as a cultural wasteland. But today, tourists and residents are willing to engage themselves in a re-appraisal of this city’s cultural construct. In years past people came to Las Vegas for reasons more rooted in debauchery than perhaps today. But that is okay because, as we have seen in so many instances, the value of things has become illusive. Critics are now telling us that anything is more or less real than anything else . . . and that nothing in Vegas endures. Those circumstances might be so. But is it true that there is nothing special to see or do that can’t be seen or done elsewhere in this fantasy world of entertainment that has so captured our imaginations and pocketbooks? Some of the great subtexts within Las Vegas’ landscape of pop culture, the juxtapositions of such elements as love-hate, attraction-fear that we seem to have with each other, work mightily to elicit and transmit knowledge. These juxtapositions swarm around the so-called vulgarities of Las Vegas and make the City’s laden virtues difficult to recognize, let alone embrace. If you’re uncomfortable abandoning yourself to the perfumed pleasures of some sensual self-indulgence, it’s probably because what you’re watching is unbearably real and sings out with an air of authenticity. In a particularly telling scene in Stephen Sachs’ play Central Avenue, an aging black jazz musician named Sam Washington, an old guard saxophonist who realizes that the times are changing but who nevertheless has a strong need to pass his music on, exclaims to his young and white protégé Eddie James: “You gotta live the life before you earn the right to blow the notes.”

**Blowing the Notes**

Las Vegas has earned the right to “blow the notes.” It is a city with developed value functions that are challenging preconceived notions about the role of art in a landscape of pop culture. Louis Kavouras, chair of the Department of Dance here at UNLV and a principal dancer in the Erick Hawkins Company in New York City, was voted Best Male Dancer in 1997 by New York’s cultural elite. He has been performing and choreographing at UNLV since 1992! Mr. Kavouras’ dance companion is Matthew Sandoval, an undergraduate Theatre major who is examining the innate relations of locality and space
between the permeable boundaries of stage movement and dance. Together they are performing Mr. Kavouras' *My Brother*, a piece that was put on the stage most recently in Edinburgh for the famed Scottish Festival. *My Brother* has been seen throughout the United States, Western Europe, Russia, Nova Scotia, Asia, Guatemala, as well as here in Las Vegas. *My Brother* springs from the local Modernity’s design lab, from the critical regionalism, vernacular, authenticity, and tradition which is Las Vegas. Through hybridity, mimicry, and synthesis, Kavouras and Sandoval capture some of the conflicted energies and ever-present anxieties of life lived in big cities during this fin de siecle period of time. It is a working, breathing documentary of not only life as it is lived on the streets of Las Vegas, but of life as it is lived in any large city in the Western world. Kavouras’ choreography is accessibly written. Though everything is made to seem realistic at first to the gathered audience, it doesn’t take the two dancers' scrutiny long to reveal to us their ability to penetrate beneath the gloss of artificiality within their expansive time frames. Intercutting different sections with fast dance phrases and repeating themes, Kavouras’ measured rhythms enable the perceptive observers to take in the colors, the music, the sensual, and all the mesmerizing craziness that has shaped each brother's life. Through the specified patterns of movement found within the performance of *My Brother*, Louis and Matthew are able to bridge cultural divides and make relational connections. These dancers facilitate a new way of investigating notions of physicality, encounter, site, and context. Kavouras and Sandoval reignite old questions about partnerships and consortia kinships through pushes and pulls and yet they still manage to break free of being cloistered or constrained by some faux-Continental fare. The clarity of Kavouras' aesthetic, sequenced through a series of duets and solos stripped of all unnecessary ornament, creates a matrix of confluences for new meaning and resonance. Together and separately, Kavouras and Sandoval search for a balance between grittiness, artificiality, and authenticity in the blurred boundaries of the urban sublime. Both brothers poetically articulate specificities and complexities that are somehow indigenous to the late 20th century/early 21st century preconceived notions about the role of life in a dance landscape of pop culture. At times they seem to
comment on our inability to appreciate the pure and the beautiful while they are in our personal grasp.

The Kavouras Design Lab

The strategies for cross-cultural practice investigated by the Las Vegas/Kavouras dance design lab can no longer be dismissed as one-liner sound bites. There are sequences of meaningful moments in My Brother that may be understood as a model for a new, more honest affinity or inclination for urban articulations and risk taking than a belly-dancing Vegas fantasy made flesh and concrete. There are genuine moments of calm information processing in the protocols and new spaces found in Kavouras’ My Brother which belies a perception of Vegas as cluttered and fussy and, perhaps more importantly, provide a valuable antidote to the trend to offer simplistic solutions to complex problems. In years past it was hard to sell tourists and the “typical” Las Vegas audience on anything less than total magic. But now, moving far beyond the gloss of artificiality, the aesthetic enclaves and cultural shifts delivered by the two brothers in Kavouras' choreography bristle sometimes with the quiet tension that often co-habits casual distance and intense voyeurism. As members of the audience that demands contemporary relevance, we suspect that excerpts from an extraordinary life are being played out before our eyes. In My Brother, Kavouras is telling his audience that art is not a soulless container but a powerful aesthetic experience that not only rivals the cursory lure of entertainment but also is quite capable of moving far beyond that initial layer of engagement. In a city known the world over for making entertainment an art form in and of itself, Louis' choreographed effort in My Brother was initiated out of his Las Vegas design lab with the expressed intention of broadening dance's appeal beyond the iconic showgirls and the overlays of beeping slot machines. His conducted effort of designing between cultures and spaces has gone a long way to solidifying the air of a cosmopolitan culture upon a city so easily derided in the past for embracing commercial kitsch. Louis' aesthetic effort in My Brother is a serious exercise exhaling from a design studio situated in the public persona of a celebrated and maligned city.

Changes
Look at what’s been happening here – look at all these changes that we have gazed upon. Knowledge is changing. How learners mentally process visual representations is changing. In-person and on-site learning modules are changing. Changes. Changes is a popular jazz term. Musicians refer to “playing the changes,” “learning new changes,” referring to the harmonies resulting from changes. Las Vegas continues to change. As the premiere Post Modern city, Las Vegas is a dynamic, creative cultural site for the processing of visual representations. Its design labs, such as the Kavouras studio, are not emerging – they have emerged! Las Vegas is a city with an abundance of little treasures where visuals communicate, inform, and teach. There exists here a general relaxing of the academic methods and demands that can prove so stifling to the creative spirit. And it is precisely that creativity, that energy of spirit beaten on the American anvil of suppression and sponsored self-censorship, that is so intimately linked to the artistic impact of the Las Vegas design labs than to any significant political ideology. Performing artists and visual artists alike can get lost in the developing modules of fantasy and artistic license to create here. It seems like nothing is too much in Las Vegas. Put that dementia in context and floor it, put the pedal to the metal. . . . Fiction and reality will remain blurred in this desert metropolis for Las Vegas remains a series of contradictions. Violence and pride…operatic and cathartic…exhausting and claustrophobic. . . . “Buy the ticket, take the ride, tune in, freak out, get beaten.” Chalk it up to forced consciousness expansion if you must but, whether you like it or not, Las Vegas is capable of producing civilization-advancing work. Dave Hickey, Las Vegas ’ and UNLV's resident MacArthur genius, has recently exclaimed: “Good intentions, private feeling and fine language count for little . . . what we believe must be seen to be believed.” You’ve seen the Las Vegas/Kavouras dance design lab performed before your eyes – do you now believe? Or is it still out of your line of vision? Are you just passing through? Are you one of those who wanted more to be entertained than to participate? The dissemination of knowledge and information can never be free of culture. Rather than deny the specificity of the individual disciplines, it must be explored how each may inform the other. It is imperative that we foster a collaborative effort of cross-pollination to extend
the discourse of inquiry and practice that will include a multi-disciplinary approach to theorizing and learning.

Las Vegas has served long enough as an expensive one-night stand for the image-makers. Steve Wynn, the business visionary who developed the Golden Nugget, the Mirage, Treasure Island, and Bellagio into world class resorts, opened the door to serious art viewing in this city when he made available to the general public his personal collection of late 19th and early 20th century art through the Gallery of Fine Art at the Bellagio resort in 1998. Mr. Wynn’s latest venture, of transforming the old Desert Inn into the new Wynn Resort (initially to be called Le Reve), will do so without the current trend of following thematic architectural designs. Mr. Wynn explained at a recent press conference: “The resort won't have a theme, something very un-Vegas . . . Le Reve is about our desert and the southwestern United States . . . It’s time for Las Vegas to have its own hotel.” Indeed, the time has come to recognize Las Vegas as providing a genuine interface between academia and “the real world” where we can step out of the darkness and bask in the halo of enhanced experience and understanding. In the time frame of our lives . . . driven mercilessly by the Information Age . . . cultural boundaries, distinctions between high and low, art and commerce, will lose their clarity and vitality. And one of the answers or insights proffered by Las Vegas’ network of design labs is direct engagement. The starkness that is Las Vegas is unmasking the hard truths that lie beneath the glitz and the superficial gaze.

Emergence of an Internationally Recognized Culture of Studio: Las Vegas as a Design Lab

In this chapter on Art and Cultural Participation in Nevada, you’ve learned about the direct interlocking of one Las Vegas design lab to a post Modern audience through a collaborative presentation of performed movement and expressed words. For art to fit so seamlessly into the noisy landscape that is contemporary Las Vegas life, it has had to develop a thick skin. The creative energies that Kavouras poured into his choreography of *My Brother* are part of a larger continuum, a continuity of aesthetic and intellectual endeavors that must be constantly renewed by the interplay and confluence of tradition and innovation. Is this representation of
thinking, feeling, and information processing a kind of renaissance or will time stamp it as nothing more than stillbirth? Like the child whose tears were likened to a pearl and the world beat that poor child the harder to make him shed more pearls, Las Vegas has been battered over the years by a global community to produce its own unique brand of pearls. This beating and mauling of Las Vegas created the circumstances out of which serious design labs could take root and did. Las Vegas' mosaic of theoretical design labs or studios may be likened to a string of precious pearls where the creative spirit is more than incidental, is more than irrelevant. For now it is accessible. May it always remain so.

**Conclusion**

Citizens of Nevada and tourists to the Silver State should celebrate the living history of the Sagebrush State by supporting the various community-based Fine Arts and Humanities projects presented in both the urban centers (Reno/Sparks and Las Vegas areas) as well as the rural environs scattered throughout the state. Americans in general and Nevadans in particular need to understand and recognize the impact and the central role of the arts in their daily lives, their communities, and their beloved state. Sustained support for the Arts and Humanities will strengthen the creative environment for artists and arts organizations.

Enriching the various studios in the State of Nevada would benefit the cultural life of citizens and visitors alike through:

- Increasing public access, participation and investment in Nevada’s arts and culture
- Incorporating the arts as an essential element in the educational experience of all Nevadans
- Strengthen the creative environment where the art process unfolds
- Encourage and support diverse organizations that produce, present, and promote excellence in the arts

**Data Sources and Suggested Readings**

Susan Armitage, *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women’s West*.

Anne Balsamo, *Science, Technology and Culture* (Culture Studies, Vol. 12, No 3).


David Beesley, *Crow's Range: An Environmental History of the Sierra Nevada*.


Lawrence I. Berkove, *The Sagebrush Anthology: Literature from the Silver Age of the Old West* (Mark Twain and His Circle Series).

Jim Bickford, *Las Vegas Dreams*.


Maria E. Brower, *Nevada City: Images of America*.


Frankie Sue Del Papa, *Political History of Nevada*.


Timothy P. Duane, *Shaping the Sierra: Nature, Culture, and Conflict in the Changing West*.


Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada*.


Rafael Falcon, *Salsa: A Taste of Hispanic Culture*.

Francis P. Farquhar, *History of the Sierra Nevada*.

Stuart J. Fiedel, *Prehistory of the Americas*.

William L. Fox, *In the Desert of Desire: Las Vegas and the Culture of Spectacle*.

Dennis B. Fradin, *Nevada: From Sea to Shining Sea*.


Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Material Culture).

Betty J. Glass, Martha B. Gould Jean Ford, *Women in Nevada History: An Annotated Bibliography of Published Sources*.


Brent Harold, *Owning the Sierra Nevada: The Short History of a Long Infatuation*.

John Heinerman, *Hidden Treasures of Ancient American Cultures*.

Dean Heller, *Political History of Nevada*.


Michael Kammen, *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture*.

J. Dee Kille, *Academic Freedom Imperiled: The McCarthy Era at the University of Nevada* (Wilbur S. Shepperson Series in Nevada History).


Michael J. Makley, *The Infamous King of the Comstock: William Sharon and the Gilded Age in the West* (Wilbur S. Shepperson Series in Nevada History).


Charles W. Meier, *Before the Nukes: The Remarkable History of the Nevada Test Site*.


Marianne Mithun, *The Languages of Native North America* (Cambridge Language Surveys)


David F. Myrick, *Reproduction of Thompson and West’s History of Nevada 1881 with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers*.


Janice Oberding, *Haunted Nevada*.


Phil Patton, *Dreamland: Travels Inside the Secret World of Roswell and Area 51*.

Helen Poulton, *Index to History of Nevada 1881*.


Richard Quebedeaux, *Prime Sources of California and Nevada Local History: 151 Rare and Important City, County and State Directories, 1850-1906*.

James B. Reid and Ronald M. James, *Uncovering Nevada’s Past: A Primary Source History of the Silver State* (Wilbur S. Shepperson Series in Nevada History).


Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre’s First Half Century* (Genres in American Cinema Series).

Tracy I. Storer, Robert L. Usinger, and David Lukas, *Sierra Nevada Natural History* (California Natural History Guides).

Vassili Sulich, *Vision in the Desert: A Dancer’s Life*.

Thompson and West, *History of Nevada: 1881 with Illustrations*.


Frederick turner, *John Muir: Rediscovering America*.

Nicholas Curchin Vrooman, *Songs for Asking: Perspectives on Traditional Culture Among Nevada Indians*.


Frank Wright, *Nevada Yesterdays: Short Looks at Las Vegas History*.


Community Resources

**Hot August Night**, a classic car rally and gathering, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS05](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS05)

**Street Vibrations**, a motorcycle rally and fan gathering, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS08](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS08)

**Great Reno Balloon Race**, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS07](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS07)

**Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-off**, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS15](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS15)


**The Reno Rodeo**, [http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS03](http://www.reno.com/section/EVENTS03)


**UNR Arboretum**, [http://www.unr.edu/arboretum/](http://www.unr.edu/arboretum/)


**Nevada Festival Ballet**, [http://www.aci.net/nfb/](http://www.aci.net/nfb/)

**Nevada Opera**, [http://www.nevadaopera.org/default.html](http://www.nevadaopera.org/default.html)

Reno/Sparks Theatre Coalition,  [http://www.theatercoalition.org/](http://www.theatercoalition.org/)

Sierra Arts,  [http://www.sierra-arts.org/](http://www.sierra-arts.org/)


Nevada Arts Council,  [http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/arts/](http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/arts/)

Nevada State Museum,  [http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/museums/cc/carson.htm](http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/museums/cc/carson.htm)


Carson Hot Springs, the Lone Mountain Cemetery,  [http://www.interment.net/data/us/nv/carson_city/lone_mt.htm](http://www.interment.net/data/us/nv/carson_city/lone_mt.htm)


Cowboy Poetry,  [http://www.westernfolklife.org/site/](http://www.westernfolklife.org/site/)

Ghost Train,  [http://www.robertwynn.com/Ghosttrain.htm](http://www.robertwynn.com/Ghosttrain.htm)


River Run, http://www.laughlinriverrun.com/
Clark County Heritage Museum, http://www.co.clark.nv.us/parks/Clark_County_Museum.htm
Lost City Museum of Archaeology, http://www.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/MUSEUMS/LOST/mus-lost.htm
Searchlight Museum, http://www.co.clark.nv.us/PARKREC/srchlght.htm
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* International Biography and History of Russian Sociology Projects feature interviews and autobiographical materials collected from scholars who participated in the intellectual movements spurred by the Nikita Khrushchev's liberalization campaign. The materials are posted as they become available, in the language of the original, with the translations planned for the future. Dr. Boris Doktorov (bdoktorov@inbox.ru) and Dmitri Shalin (shalin@unlv.nevada.edu) are editing the projects.