

# **Carson City Cultural Commission**

## **Meeting Schedule 2013**

**5:30 p.m.**

**Community Center - Sierra Room  
851 E. William Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701**

**March 19**

**June 18**

**September 17**

**December 17**

**FYI**

# Notoriety behind bars



The prison yard at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City as seen from the roof of the building. In the background is the quarry from which the sandstone blocks were hewn for construction of the prison buildings. MARILYN NEWTON/RGJ

## Nevada's State Prison has history of escape attempts, execution firsts and even a presidential nomination

By Marilyn Newton  
mnewton@rgj.com

9-30-12

After 150 years, the Nevada State Prison now is a ghost town.

Once one of the oldest operating prisons, the Nevada State Prison closed its doors on Jan. 9, 2012, as a result of budget issues. During those 150 years, the prison gained notoriety for a variety of escape attempts, as the first state to allow the use of poisonous gas as a method of execution and for having one of its convicts nominated for U.S. president.

By the time Nevada became a territory in 1861, the need for a place to house those who broke the law was glaringly apparent, and it fell to the first territorial Legislature to establish a state prison.

Abraham Curry, father of Carson City, owned and operated the Warm Springs Hotel on land located east of the capital city and readi-

**ON RGJ.COM:** For more photos from the historic Nevada State Prison in Carson City, find two photo galleries with this story on RGJ.com.

ly provided a meeting place for the new governing body.

With a potential profit to be made, Curry was eager to lease his land to the new territory for a prison. There was a sandstone quarry on the property where convicts could work. The sandstone from this quarry was used to build the state Capitol and the prison. The Legislature quickly approved the idea, and the prison was built next to the hotel. Curry was its first warden.

The land was leased for two years, after which the Legislature authorized the issuance of bonds to Curry in the amount of \$80,000 at

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Condemned convicts were strapped to this table for execution at the Nevada State Prison. MARILYN NEWTON/RGJ



Abraham Curry was the first warden of the Nevada State Prison. PHOTO COURTESY NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# Prison

Continued from Page 1D

the rate of 10 percent annually for the purchase of the buildings and 20 acres of land.

## Riots, escapes and more

Like any prison, the Nevada State Prison saw its share of excitement over the years.

One of the early wardens was Robert Howland, a strict disciplinarian. On his first day on the job, a prisoner refused to fall in with the other convicts for breakfast. Howland proceeded to the blacksmith shop and procured a 12-foot piece of steel that had been heated red hot on one end. He returned to the cell and ordered the inmate to fall in; again the inmate refused. Howland then stuck the rod, which had cooled some, through the bars. With both hands, the convict grabbed the steel bar, only to release it quickly, shrieking in agony. A few more prods forced him into submission.

That winter, the inmate escaped, only to be returned. The story has no happy ending. After serving his sentence, the convict made his way to Virginia City. Refusing a request to leave, he was later found hanging from some hoisting works.

On May 1, 1867, a guard spotted a fire in a pile of stove wood near the kitchen, but it already was too late. As the fire spread, prisoners were taken from their cells and marched at gunpoint to the Ormsby County Jail some distance away.

Firefighters rushed to the prison in time to save the northwest part of the sandstone structure, but the rest, including all records, was lost to the blaze. Luckily, no one died in the arson fire.

The most serious incident at the prison occurred on Sept. 17, 1871, when a guard and a civilian were killed and Lt. Gov. Frank Denver and four guards wounded as 29 prisoners fought their way out.

Denver was having a party at the warden's house when the ceiling literally fell down around them, with two prisoners. Quick on the draw, Denver shot one of the inmates in the chest. At the same time, escapees poured into the yard and opened fire on guards with weapons seized from the armory, including two Henry repeating rifles, four double-barreled shotguns, five six-shooters and about 3,000 rounds of ammunition. In the melee, Denver was shot in the hip and crippled for life.

Although outnumbered, the murderers, train robbers and horse thieves killed two and were able to gain their freedom and scatter in different directions.

Among those who escaped were four members of the notorious Verdi Train robbery gang. Most were found about

six days later camped around a high Sierra lake. One last gun battle ensued and a pursuer named Morrison was killed. All the convicts were captured. The lake where they were found is now named Convict Lake.

There were other breakouts, but none as deadly.

## Inmate for president

The Nevada State Prison gained much notoriety over the years, but it was a first when one of their inmates, serving time for murder, was nominated for president of the United States.

Martin Preston was just 25 when he arrived in Goldfield and joined the "Wobblies," the Industrial Workers of the World. The union's aim to include every trade in town was not shared by all, and it came to a head one night when Preston and a friend were outside a nonunion restaurant trying to persuade potential customers not to enter.

The owner of the restaurant, John P. "Tony" Silva, responded by raising a revolver to a firing position, only to be fatally shot by Preston. A lynch mob was quickly formed, but the two men escaped. They were captured two days later, and Preston was sentenced to 20 years in prison for the shooting.

When the IWW party met in New York in July 1908, Preston's name came up. From prison, he was unanimously approved for the presidential nomination on the Socialist ticket. He couldn't campaign, but that didn't stop him from granting interviews from his prison cell.

His party received more votes than either the Populist or Independent party tickets in some states, but the labor party was on the ballots in only 15 states — Nevada not among them — and Preston ended up on the bottom during the count. Preston walked out of the prison on April 28, 1914, and

The letters of the prison are carved into one of the hand-hewn sandstone blocks. PHOTOS BY MARILYN NEWTON/IRGI



Many convicts have left something of themselves in the form of artwork in Nevada State Prison cells. After being convicted, Mircovitch was asked how he wanted to die. He thought it over for two days before choosing a firing squad. The choice presented a number of problems for prison officials. Prison guards refused to carry out the order, saying it was murder. Word of their refusal leaked, and the warden received offers from as far away as England by people volunteering their services. Disgusted, he ordered a 1,000-pound execution machine instead. It looked like a hut of steel. The muzzles of three rifles protruded through three holes. The weapons were equipped with silencers and only two were loaded with live ammunition, thereby allowing the guards involved some comfort in their unpleasant task. In addition, the hut was positioned in such a way the guards would not see the condemned man die. There was no need to pull the triggers. The simple cutting of three strings set coiled spring mechanisms into action, and the weapons fired.

## Nevada executions

In the early years, even after Nevada gained statehood, the counties in which crimes occurred carried out executions, and hanging was the only method used. Records are incomplete, but at least 20 executions were carried out in the various county seats. One man was hanged in 1860 when Nevada was still part of Utah Territory.

When the prison took over the process in 1905, it followed that same traditions — until 1911 when the Legislature decided the condemned should be allowed to choose whether to die on the gallows or by firing squad. The new law was tested only four months after it took effect.

Andrija Mircovitch, a laborer from Tonopah, was sentenced to death for stabbing John Gregovitch in full view of more than 20 witnesses, including the local sheriff, in a dispute over Mircovitch's cousin's estate, which Gregovitch was the administrator.

All of this took its toll on warden George W. Cowing, who resigned before the execution was carried out.

On May 14, 1913, Mircovitch shook hands with the new warden, Denver Dickerson, then calmly walked past the 20 witnesses to a chair to which he was strapped. A paper heart was pinned to his shirt. Refusing a blindfold, he said, "I die like a soldier." It was the only time the shooting gallery, as it became known, was used. Mircovitch, like others executed, is buried in one of the two small cemeteries at the prison.

The prison again gained fame in 1921, when Nevada passed a law to allow the use of poisonous gas as the only method of execution. Although three years passed before the next execution, Nevada was the first state in the union to use a gas chamber.

A number of issues had to be resolved before the first execution could be carried out. First, convicts refused to work on building the gas chamber, and six tried to incite a mass protest against the death house construction. A couple of days in the prison "dungeon" ended the protests.

The first life lost was on Feb. 7, 1924, when a cat, used to test the facility, died of the lethal gas. The next day, Gee Jon, convicted of killing a rival tong gang member, was the first person in the country to be executed by poisonous gas.

The last man to die in Nevada's gas chamber was Jesse Bishop in 1979. The method of execution was changed to lethal injection.

Sources: Nevada State Journal — Oct. 15, 1972, June 3, 1973, Aug. 17, 1975, Oct. 26, 1975, March 5, 1977, March 13, 1977 and May 8, 1978; Nevada Department of Museum; Thompson and West report of the prison from 1923-1964; special thanks to Warden Greg Smith and the staff of the Warm Springs Correctional Center, Nevada Department of Corrections Director Greg Cox and to Gov. Brian Sandoval.

FYI

# nevadaarts

NEWS

## MARIANO GONZALEZ PERFORMS IN WASHINGTON D.C.

In celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month, the 2012 Homegrown Concert Series in Washington, D.C. featured Las Vegas resident Mariano Gonzales, master of the Paraguayan folk harp, accompanied by guitarist Dani Cortaza, singer Javier Di Francesco and dancer Illiana Belen Guato.

A NAC Folklife Apprenticeship Grant recipient, Gonzales' career as a professional harpist, composer, and harp maker has taken him around the world and into multiple musical genres, but he remains committed to the unique and exquisite Guaraní folk music of his homeland. Born and raised in Buena Vista, Paraguay, he began playing the harp at the age of five, under the tutelage of his father and grandfather. Gonzales settled down in Las Vegas ten years ago as a featured performer with Tony Orlando; he continues to tour internationally.

Rebecca Snetselaar, Folklife Program Associate, facilitated the presentation and introduced the group in two concerts—September 25 at the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Center; and September 26 at the American Folklife Center. "The NAC is delighted to have Mariano Gonzalez represent the diversity of Las Vegas on a national stage," said Folklife Program coordinator Pat Atkinson.

## ■ READY TO RECITE?

2013 nevada



It's time for 2013 Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Contest (POL), a dynamic and interactive way to teach poetry and meet English/Lan-

guage Arts requirements for high school students. Now in its eighth year, POL welcomes participation by all high-school-aged students in Nevada. Through studying and memorizing classic and contemporary poetry, students become immersed in the power of expression and provocative ideas. Reciting the poems in front of peers and judges gives them valuable experience in public speaking and self-confidence. Just ask any of our finalists!

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## INTRODUCING The 2013 Artist Fellows

The NAC Artist Fellowship Program was created in 1988 to encourage the pursuit of artistic excellence and raise the profile of Nevada's meritorious artists. Each year, these highly competitive awards provide artists working in the visual, literary and performing arts funding to develop their work over the year-long fellowship period. The fellows provide free public events, such as readings, exhibitions, performances and master classes relevant to their disciplines.

### THE 2013 ARTIST FELLOWS



CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

# NAC NEWS

## AGENCY COMINGS & GOINGS

The Nevada Arts Council is a division of the Nevada Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs.

Brian Sandoval, *Governor*, State of Nevada  
Claudia Vecchio, *Director*, Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs

### CARSON CITY OFFICE

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### NEVADA ARTS COUNCIL BOARD

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Linda Ficklin, *Administrative Services Officer*  
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La Vonne Vasick, *Administrative Assistant*

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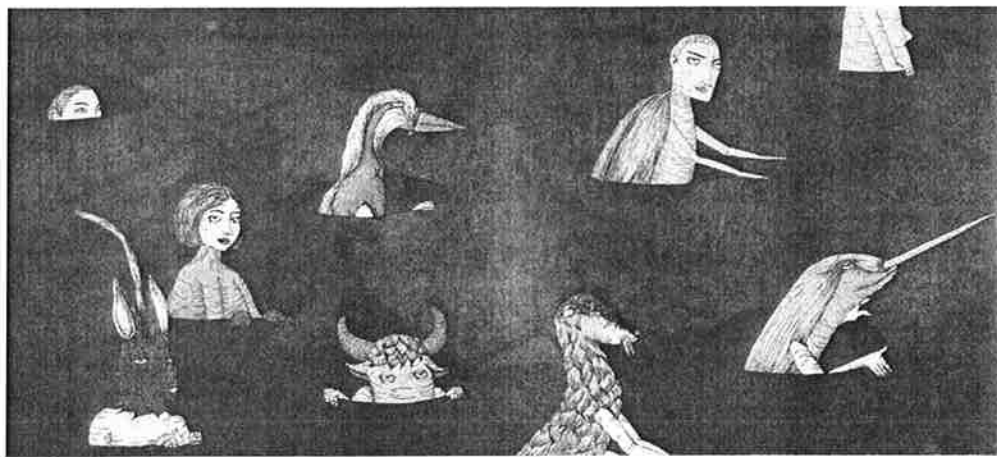
#### Grants Program

Ann Libby, *Coordinator*

\*Positions supported with a National Endowment for the Arts grant.

Our Account Tech **Kendra Furlough** has returned to Taxation, her former agency. We wish her the best as she continues working on her bachelor's degree in Human Services Management. Taking over the duties of this position is **Kathy Davis**, who joins us from the administration of offices of the Division of Museums and History. Kathy has been with the State of Nevada since 1998 and has worked for agencies in the Department of Cultural Affairs since 2000. She brings a wealth of skills and even more enthusiasm to her new position.

## OXS SPOTLIGHT: Prints by Eunkang Koh



The Nevada Arts Council's OXS gallery features the work of Reno printmaker **Eunkang Koh** in *A Study of Human* through November 16. Koh uses intaglio printmaking to depict creatures that are part human and part animal—living and interacting in a world absent of the pretense that human behavior is different from animal behavior. A recipient of a 2013 Artist Fellowship Honorable Mention Grant, Koh is currently an Associate Professor in Printmaking at the University of Nevada, Reno.

*Down to Earth*  
Eunkang Koh  
Intaglio  
7" x 10"  
2010

ooo

*Radiant Trajectory*, a series of mixed media paintings and drawings by 2013 Artist Fellowship recipient **Orlando Javier Montenegro Cruz** of Las Vegas, will be featured in the OXS Gallery from November 26, 2012, through January 18, 2013.

## Explore the Great Basin: In Print and Online

Travel the back roads of Nevada, Utah, California and beyond to examine this region's landscape, its people and the effects of change and abandonment through the *Great Basin Exteriors: A Photographic Survey* catalogue. The publication features the richly evocative images of photographers Daniel Cheek, Adam Jahiel and Nolan Preece that comprised an exhibit of the same name that recently ended a two-and-a-half-year tour of the region. The 60 page full-color catalogue includes an essay by noted critic Kirk Robertson, and is available for \$15 on our website at [nac.nevadaculture.org](http://nac.nevadaculture.org). Check out the *Great Basin Exteriors* interactive website at [great-basinxteriors.com](http://great-basinxteriors.com), created by David Branby Advertising and supported by the Western States Arts Federation.



# NAC NEWS

## INTRODUCING The 2013 Artist Fellows



Las Vegas native **Chris Bauder** lived in a small town in the Mojave Desert after high school for two years, the only time that he spent living outside of Nevada. Bauder received his AA degree

in 1981 from Cerro Coso Community College in California, then transferred to the University of Nevada, Reno. Inspired by his professors and the flourishing Reno arts scene, he received his BFA in 2002 with a focus on sculpture and ceramics. Bauder earned an MFA in sculpture from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2008. The Brett Wesley Gallery in Las Vegas recently presented his work in a solo exhibition, and the College of Southern Nevada will host "Skull Show," the biennial group show Bauder curates.



**Steve Gehrke's** first book, *The Resurrection Machine*, received the 1999 John Ciardi Prize and was published by BkMk Press in 2000. His second book, *The Pyramids of Malpighi*,

was selected as the Philip Levine Prize for Poetry, and published by Anhinga Press in 2004. Most recently, his book *Michelangelo's Seizure*, was selected for the National Poetry Series and published by University of Illinois Press in 2007. That same year, Gehrke received a literature fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. His other awards include *The Faulkner-Wisdom Poetry Prize* from Pirate's Alley, and a Pushcart Prize, among others. Poems from his fourth collection have appeared in *The Missouri Review*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Shenandoah* and other journals. He teaches poetry, literature and screenwriting at the University of Nevada, Reno.



Hailed as "a deft, smooth flute soloist" by the *New York Times*, **Jennifer Grim** has received numerous accolades, including first prize in several national chamber music competi-

tions. She is the flutist of the award-winning Zephyros Winds, as well as the solo flutist of the New York Chamber Soloists and the principal flutist of the Vermont Mozart Festival. Grim has performed across the nation with such groups as the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble. A passionate advocate of contemporary music, Grim is a founding member of Proteus, an award-winning ensemble. She also presents master classes at institutions across the country in both solo and chamber music. A native of Berkeley, California, Grim holds a BA from Stanford University, and MA and PhD of Musical Arts degrees from Yale University. She is currently Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.



**Grace Hutchison** was raised in the Black Hills of South Dakota in a musical household, and began playing piano and clarinet at an early age. She trained as a classical soprano in her

teens and sang in a folk band with her father, leading to nearly 200 shows and her first taste of the recording studio. At 19, she moved to Southern California, where she studied guitar, piano and vocal technique at the Musician's Institute. In 2003, she fell in love with the cultural and natural landscape of Reno, and immersed herself in its arts community, working in the administrative offices of Reno Philharmonic for six years. She established the art-rock band The Grace Gatsbies, and in 2008 was named one of Reno's top 101 most influential performing artists of the last 25 years. Her debut album, *Strange Attractors*, is set for release in the fall of 2012.



A fifth-generation Ne-  
vadan, **Tracy McQuay** graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno, with a degree in education and, more recently, with a MA in Integrating Arts into Education. A

teacher at Mark Twain Elementary in Carson City, the community in which she was raised, McQuay facilitates a multi-grade afterschool program where students read, write and dramatize poetry. A member of the of Ash Canyon Poets and the Society of Children's Writers and Illustrators, McQuay has published poetry in several national literary magazines and received a NAC Honorable Mention in literature in 2012. Her current work is a coming-of-age novel set in Nevada about a young girl named Truckee.



**Orlando Javier Montenegro-Cruz** is a visual artist who works in painting and drawing. Born in Managua, Nicaragua, in 1982, he immigrated to Las Vegas in 1989, earned a BFA

from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, in 2007, and then a MFA from the University of Arizona. Montenegro-Cruz's work has been featured in solo shows at the Left of Center Gallery, Winchester Cultural Center, and the College of Southern Nevada's Fine Arts Gallery and in group exhibition at the Arts Factory, various UNLV facilities and as part of First Friday's Get Back Alley. He currently teaches drawing as an adjunct professor at UNLV.

»Please note:

GO™ online submission time for Jackpot Grants has been changed from 11:59 p.m. to 5 p.m. starting immediately. This will allow staff to field any last minute calls from applicants.



## Artists as Community Animators

To increase the number of artist residencies in Nevada schools and communities, NAC has created the Artist Residency Express Grant (AREx). Artist/sponsor designed workshops, lecture-demonstrations and other community-based activities offer rich and engaging experiences, and often lead to the implementation of dynamic local cultural programs. Designed for community and educational sponsors to easily host short-term artist residencies (three day limit), AREx grants are up to \$1,200 (\$400/day for one to three days) and are available throughout the year to eligible applicants. No cash match is required.

- **Battle Mountain Arts Presenters**, Battle Mountain, \$400 – residency with poet Gretchen Skivington at the Battle Mountain Museum, November 30, 2012.
- **Capital City Arts Initiative**, Carson City, \$800 – residencies with author Cindie Geddes on September 18, and author Dr. Eric Rasmussen on October 17. Both occurred at the Carson City Library.
- **Churchill Arts Council**, Fallon, \$1,600 – residencies with visual artist Rositza Todorova on January 25–26, author Laura Bell on March 9, and author Tupelo Hassman on May 4, 2013. Most residency activities are scheduled at the Oats Park Arts Center.
- **Clark County Parks & Recreation**, Las Vegas, \$1,200 – residency with dancer/choreographer Martha Smith at the Winchester Cultural Center, August 13–17.
- **Goldwell Open Air Museum**, Beatty, \$1,200 – residency with visual artist Anne Hoff at the Open Air Printers Studio in downtown Las Vegas, November 2–4.
- **Lost City Museum**, Overton, \$1,200 – residency with Native American Master Flute Artist Tim Blueflint at the Lost City Museum, July 26–28.

## Grants Support Career Development

During the first quarter of FY13, NAC awarded 33 Professional Development Grants (PDG) to artists, arts administrators and arts educators to attend a variety of conferences and other gatherings for career enhancement for a total of \$21,150.

With PDG support, Nevada was represented at the Kennedy Center's National Seminar for Teaching Artists in Washington, D.C.; Arts Northwest Booking Conference in Boise, ID; Western Museum Association's Annual Meeting in Palm Springs, CA; and American Art Therapy Conference in Savannah, GA, as well as others.

Created to support the continuing education of Nevada's cultural workforce, PDGs are non-competitive grants available on a first-come, first-served basis. Grants provide up to \$650 to attend regional or national events, up to \$500 for in-state activities and up to \$350 for NAC-sponsored activities. Don't delay in getting your request in queue. Apply online at GO™. Questions? Please contact us at 775.687.6680.

## Quarterly Jackpot Grants Awarded

Nine Nevada artists and one public institution shared a total of \$9,148 in FY13 Second Quarter Jackpot Grants to support the following for arts and arts learning projects occurring October 1–December 31, 2012:

- **Dean Burton**, Reno, \$853 – to support the printing of photographs for an exhibition at Viewpoint Photographic Arts Center in Sacramento, CA in November.
- **Christina Camarena**, Reno, \$1,000 – to support the creation of a literary journal featuring the writings from detainees at Jan Evans Detention Center.
- **Matt Dodge**, Incline Village, \$595 – to support the framing of new works for an exhibit at the University of Phoenix Gallery beginning November 19.

- **Joseph Galata**, Reno, \$700 – to present an original performance project and workshop at the NYC World International Conference in October.
- **University of Nevada, Reno – Art Department**, Reno, \$1,000 – to support publicity and visiting artist travel connected with *Prospectives '12 International Festival of Digital Art* in October.
- **Diane (Bush) Olson-Baskin**, Las Vegas, \$1,000 – to support the creation and publicizing of a new performance art project, "The Big Cover Up."
- **Southern Nevada Handweavers and Spinners Guild**, Las Vegas, \$1,000 – to support the residency of fiber artist Nadine Sanders who will present advanced techniques of inlay in weaving at the Blind Center in October.
- **Dr. Nolan Stolz**, Las Vegas, \$1,000 – to support a series of school residencies in which students in Nye and Clark counties will read and rehearse Dr. Stolz's musical compositions, as well as work directly with Dr. Stolz as a living composer.
- **Markus Tracy**, Las Vegas, \$1,000 – to support five site-specific projects, "site-on-site," within the Winchester community of Las Vegas in October.
- **Jevijoe Vitug**, Las Vegas, \$1,000 – to support the exhibition, "How To's," featuring his paintings documenting the immigrant experience in Las Vegas at the Winchester Cultural Center Gallery, November 13 through the end of the year.

Examples of eligible Jackpot projects for organizations include arts exhibitions, performances, readings and concerts, sponsoring of arts related workshops and conferences, or marketing and promotional activities. Examples for individuals include projects for preparing portfolios and work samples, or presentation of work in performances or publications. The deadline for FY2013 Third Quarter Jackpot Grant applications is November 15, 2012 at 5 p.m. for projects occurring between January 1 and March 31, 2013. First time applicants are strongly encouraged to speak to Ann Libby, Grants Program Coordinator, prior to applying online.