

# MORGAN LEHMAN

534 West 24th Street, New York, New York 10011

## VEGAS MAGAZINE

# *5 LAS VEGAS ART INDUSTRY INSIDERS TO WATCH*

By Kristen Peterson on December 7, 2017

Beyond the tourist corridor's flash, Las Vegas' art community has been making, collecting and showing great art for years. From established organizations to those in the making, from the Downtown gallery scene to blue-chip public art all over the city, art in Las Vegas is fascinating, varied and definitely on the rise. Of course, the excitement is fueled by people, and here we profile the local art world's most pivotal players, from its public faces to those moving the needle behind the scenes.

## **KRYSTAL RAMIREZ**



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Shown earlier this year at the Clark County Government Center, Krystal Ramirez’s installation “I Want to See” was a profound minimalist work, featuring Bible paper with the words “I want to see more brown bodies” written over and over in diluted white paint. Semitranslucent and highlighting the underrepresentation of people of color in art and media, it was a thematic continuation: Her “Paradigm,” part of the exhibit Tilting the Basin: Contemporary Art of Nevada, was an enormous handcrafted scroll pouring out internal dialogue on angst and identity.

Craft-meets-high-art is a laborious process for the artist, who explores social justice and her own Chicana identity. Given her growing recognition, her selection as the 2017-18 artist in residence at Juhl, a live/work space with a competitive program to support artists, seemed an obvious one.

In addition to reconstructing “I Want to See” for the Barrick Museum’s permanent collection, Ramirez, a professional photographer by day, says she’ll create a studio to take portraits of men through her gaze (in contrast to the centuries-old tradition of men gazing at women) while exploring new materials and projects.

## MICHELE QUINN



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After launching her career in New York at Leo Castelli Gallery, then working at Christie's and Brooke Alexander Gallery, native Las Vegan Michele Quinn returned home, bringing blue-chip art to the Downtown Arts District through Godt-Cleary Projects (later becoming G-C Arts). It was a boon for a community unaccustomed to seeing works by James Turrell, Robert Rauschenberg and John McCracken.

When it comes to postwar and contemporary art, Quinn's imprint on the city is broad. Now operating MCQ Fine Art Advisory on West 7th Street, she continues to help build private and corporate collections (including CityCenter's \$40 million art collection) while working on multiple other endeavors, including the future Art Museum at Symphony Park, of which she is a board member. As co-curator of the successful exhibit *Tilting the Basin: Contemporary Art of Nevada* in Reno, Quinn secured a warehouse pop-up space for the show's Las Vegas run and is working with developer Steven Molasky on their Smart Initiative project, which will give a platform to local and international artists.

Quinn sees the contemporary art scene in her hometown rapidly changing. "I'm under no illusion that this is going to happen overnight," she says of the Art Museum. "There's a lot of work to be done. But we're a strong board. That the *Tilting* opening brought 1,000 people to a dirt road in a warehouse shows that we are so thirsty for this."

## TIM BAVINGTON



When Tim Bavington’s colorful sculpture “Pipe Dream” became a prominent fixture at Symphony Park, he was years into a successful career, with works in museum collections, including New York City’s Museum of Modern Art, and representation by Mark Moore Fine Art in Los Angeles.

But it was this vertical interpretation of Aaron Copland’s “Fanfare for the Common Man”—constructed of painted steel, with colors assigned to the notes—that elevated his profile in Las Vegas, where the English-born artist moved in 1993 and where he studied under famed art critic Dave Hickey as an MFA student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Bavington, who continues his studio practice in the Arts District, is now in his fourth year of teaching at UNLV. His show at New York’s Morgan Lehman Gallery, featuring works inspired by the LP Frank Sinatra Conducts Tone Poems of Color, ran this past fall, and he is about to unveil a sculpture similar to “Pipe Dream” in Dallas. Meanwhile, his first local work in 12 years—an exhibit of watercolors—opens in November at MCQ Fine Art Advisory.

While he refers to his success in art as “luck,” Bavington disproves the common sentiment that artists must live on either coast to build a thriving career.

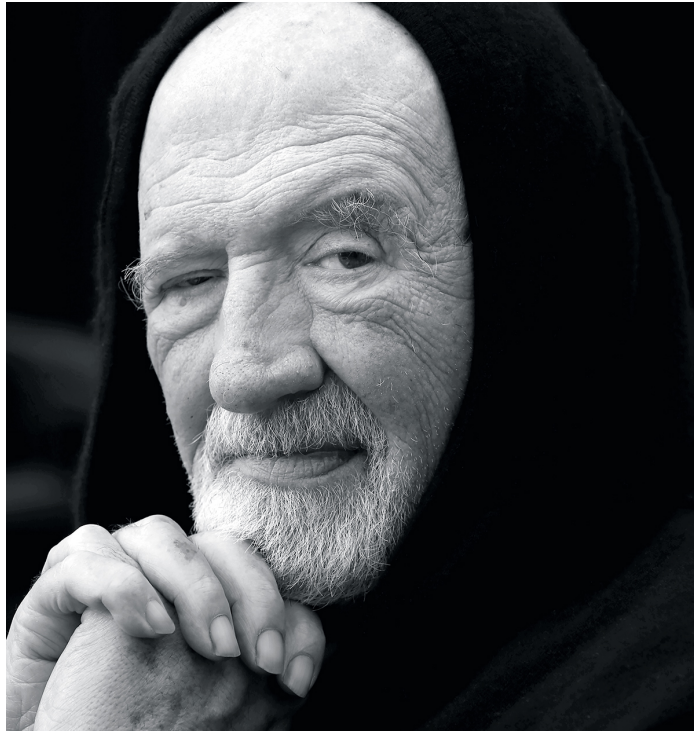
## ABBIE FRIEDMAN



Las Vegas attorney and philanthropist Abbie Friedman was a law student in Delaware when she scraped together enough money to buy an Andrew Wyeth collotype, “Indian Summer,” depicting the region she called home. After acquiring the piece from the Brandywine River Museum of Art in Chadds Ford, Penn., she hoped to someday buy the entire series. She now has a wall dedicated to Wyeth’s work in the home she shares with her fiancé, NBC Las Vegas evening news anchor Jim Snyder.

Wyeth’s more traditional and realist works stand out from the rest of Friedman’s collection of art by Alex Katz, Richard Serra, Andy Warhol, Tom Wesselmann and others, contemporary artists working in styles more associated with postwar art, featuring robust colors and touches of hard-edged minimalism. Living with art, Friedman says, is calming. Wyeth’s work brings a feeling of serenity that she remembers from the Wyeth museum. Of Warhol’s portrait of Grace Kelly (another Philly girl), she says, “I look at her and I’m just in the right place.”

## DAVE HICKEY



Controversial art critic Dave Hickey brought international art-world attention to Las Vegas when teaching his handpicked MFA students at UNLV. After leaving, then returning as a writing professor, then moving to Santa Fe, N.M., where his wife, art historian and curator Libby Lumpkin, received a tenured position, the legendarily outspoken art critic is back this semester, lecturing on art and writing at the Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art. His work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *ARTnews*, *Art in America*, *Artforum*, *Harper's Magazine* and *Vanity Fair*, among other publications. Hickey recently finished writing the book *Perfect Wave: More Essays on Art and Democracy* (to be published in November), a followup to his *Air Guitar: Essays on Art & Democracy*. His time in Las Vegas—a city he says he still misses and where

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he was living when he won a MacArthur Fellowship “genius grant”—still resonates in art discourse here. In regard to the idea that he put Las Vegas on the contemporary art map, Hickey says, “I guess I did. It wasn’t hard. Vegas was pretty much on the map when I got there. We [Libby and I] just kept collectors from paying too much for something, or paying for something that shouldn’t be bought.”