

LAS VEGAS SUN

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By *Kristen Peterson*

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Art can be a great excuse to party



Tiffany Brown

“Beneath the Neon: The Exhibit,” curated by Brian “Paco” Alvarez, re-creates the often graffitied storm drains that run beneath the Las Vegas Strip.

Nothing going on in Vegas, right? Wrong. Here you go: Two nights of gallery openings and neighborhood art parties, interactive performance art by Wendy Kveck, and an introduction to contemporary art collecting and collectors at the Las Vegas Art Museum.

It's hot out. They know. There are refreshments.

Here's the lineup:

The underground

Spending billions to re-create the rest of the world on that stretch of road we call Las Vegas Boulevard seems clever enough. But Brian “Paco” Alvarez took the idea a step further and re-created the storm drains that run underneath. For those who love life-size dioramas, this one is near-perfect: graffiti, gravel, grit, empty aerosol cans, more litter, water, mattresses and shopping carts. Known as “the tunnels,” the dark underground corridors provide an ongoing canvas for graffiti artists and a haven for homeless people. For “Beneath the Neon: The Exhibit,” on display through July 24 at the Contemporary Arts Collective, Alvarez brought in graffiti artists who paint the tunnels, including Ruckoh (profiled in the May 27 edition of the Sun). The exhibit also includes artifacts from writer Matt O’Brien’s research in the tunnels and photos by Danny Mollohan. O’Brien explored the storm drains for more than four years, befriended its inhabitants and told their stories in “Beneath the Neon: Life and Death in the Tunnels of Las Vegas.” The book inspired the exhibit, which opens today with a 6 p.m. reception at the gallery in the Arts Factory. Also, stop in the galleries inside the Arts Factory, which is holding its own party to celebrate its new west wing and restrooms.

Details: Reception for "Beneath the Neon: The Exhibit," 6 p.m. today, Contemporary Arts Collective, 101 E. Charleston Blvd., Suite 101, 382-3886 or www.lasvegascac.org or www.beneaththeneon.com.

Beauty's plight

Wendy Kveck's paintings and performances of the contemporary woman's eating rituals and societal expectations live somewhere between beautiful and disturbing. They're penetrating, painterly, deep, dark and theatrical: women in cake-frostinglike masks or faces covered with sliced meat (like skin). But it's not so gruesome. There's always a touch of humor in her paintings and performances and she's never a bore. That's pretty clear in her current exhibit, "The Look That Makes You Happy," on display at Winchester Cultural Center. See for yourself the very, very painterly works that find balance between cakelike frivolity and open wounds. Stop in for the opening reception and an interactive performance tonight at the Winchester Cultural Center Gallery.

Details: Reception and performance for "The Look That Makes You Happy" at Winchester Cultural Center, 3130 S. McLeod Drive, 455-7340. Exhibit continues through Aug. 8, free.

A moment of abundance

Naomi Arin, owner of Dust Gallery, wanted to see how the work of Curtis Fairman and Jeffrey Gibson would relate when she began curating "Make It Rain," on display through Sunday at the gallery. Undoubtedly there is a lavish vibrancy to both styles: Fairman's opulent sculptures made from assembled and polished household items and Gibson's frenetic, teasing paintings where unleashed life spills through orderly composure. The show's title, "Make It Rain," comes from club vernacular for throwing money in the air at strip clubs. In these hard economic times, why not examine the thrill of abundance via art and meet some of your downtown neighbors? Dust is celebrating its upscale relocation to SoHo Lofts with a neighborhood party inside the gallery. Though the party is geared toward SoHo and Newport Loft residents, anyone can stop by the gallery between 6 and 8 p.m., enjoy the show and mingle with residents of the new downtown. Beware: Gibson's paintings are addictive.

Details: Celebrate Dust Gallery's new home, 6 to 8 p.m., 900 Las Vegas Blvd., Suite 120 (SoHo Lofts), 880-3878 or www.dustgallery.com.

Hanging it

These art handlers have hung masterpieces at the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum and contemporary works at the Las Vegas Art Museum and local galleries. Now it's all about them. Michele C. Quinn Fine Art's new exhibit, "The Difference Between Making a Living and Making a Killing," features Quinn's art handlers past and present: Mark Brandvik, Chad Brown, JW Caldwell, Evan Dent, Neil Linssen, David Ryan, Aaron Sheppard and RC Wonderly III. Even if you don't know their names, chances are you've seen their work, including Brandvik's portraits and studies of architectural landmarks; Caldwell's mix of pop art, illustration and iconic Western images; Dent's renditions of characters from early 20th-century studio animation mixed with contemporary issues; Wonderly's geometric minimalist sculptures/paintings; and Ryan's layered, laser-cut organic paintings that have been hitting some big contemporary galleries, including Mark Moore Gallery in Los Angeles. The exhibit, which is definitely worth checking out, opens Friday with a reception at the salon at 620 S. Seventh St. It continues through Aug. 29.

Details: Opening reception and barbecue for "The Difference Between Making a Living and Making a Killing" at Michele C. Quinn Fine Art,

6 to 9 p.m. Friday, 620 S. Seventh St., 366-9339.



Artwork by JW Caldwell is featured at Michele C. Quinn Fine Art's new exhibit, "The Difference Between Making a Living and Making a Killing."

Got contemporary?

What better time to form a contemporary art collectors club than when you're showing the contemporary art of affluent collectors in town? The Las Vegas Art Museum's inaugural meeting of its collectors club will be Friday at the museum. Hear museum executive director Libby Lumpkin discuss the works in the exhibit and her experience working with collectors to assemble the exhibit. The club is open to anyone interested in learning about contemporary art and design and will include special events, educational components and quarterly trips to related sites. Though there will be a membership fee for those who join, Friday's event is free and includes the opportunity to view the work in "Las Vegas Collects," which features pieces by Uta Barth, Anish Kapoor, Damien Hirst and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Details: Inaugural meeting for the Las Vegas Art Museum Collector's Club, 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, Las Vegas Art Museum, 9600 W. Sahara Ave., 360-8000 or www.lasvegasartmuseum.org.