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# 4TH STREET GRAND OPENING

FEATURING

# SIZZLE PIE

PIZZA BOX ART SHOW

JUNE

08

6P-9P

Art by Nathaniel Benjamin, Hernan Borrero, Jill Colbert, Mike Curatello, Kaylyn Dazey, Ashley Drake, Megan Ellis, Fabio, Haleigh Hoff, Metal Jeff, Megan Jewett, Kriddafur, Mike Lucido, Matt Lundahl, Joseph Magaña, Seth McCorkle, Zno One, Summer Orr, George Quick, Ron Rash, Darin Stockwell, Jamie Swift, Angie Terrell, Canyon Webb, Pizza by Sizzle Pie, Burritos by Nom Eats, Donuts by Holey Schmidt! Coffee by Forged Coffee, Beer by Pigeon Head Brewery, Music by Elzo, Radio Coverage by KWNK

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ART OF THE STATE

BY KRIS VAGNER



Jack Malotte works on a mural on the south side of the Nevada Museum of Art with the help of a few assistants, including Theda New Breast from Montana.

PHOTO/KRIS VAGNER

## Lay of the land

Jack Malotte

**Jack Malotte eased into a lawn chair** in a thin strip of shade on Monday as the morning sun grew higher and hotter. He'd been working on his mural behind the Nevada Museum of Art all morning.

"I mostly paint landscapes," he said. "They're mostly patterned after places I've lived at." Malotte, who is Western Shoshone and Paiute, grew up in Reno and graduated from Wooster High in 1971. He went to California College of the Arts in Oakland, lived all over Northern Nevada and taught high school art in Nixon.

"A lot of this looks like Duckwater," he said about the mural. That's a town in eastern Nevada, headquarters of the Duckwater Indian Reservation—hundreds of miles from any city and not far from the nation's largest nuclear test site. Twenty years ago, Malotte became one of the town's 200-ish residents, and he still lives there.

Three assistants were adding details to the already underpainted mural, and some muted purple shapes were already recognizable as the peaks of a mountain range as seen from across a wide desert valley. With narrow brushes, local artist Ben Aleck, Kevin Jones from Woodfords, California, and Theda New Breast from Montana, carefully painted eagle feathers and lightning bolts. Next, Malotte planned to stencil on geometric designs from Washoe baskets and paint a large, round moon, with as much texture as he can see in the rural night sky. "In Duckwater, we see it so clear," he said.

While Malotte's acrylics, watercolors, pen drawings, screenprints and posters pay homage to Nevada's ranges and valleys, the landscape serves another purpose in his work, too. It's both a subject and a backdrop for satire, critique and protest.

His vistas are wide, wonderful and dotted with oceans of sagebrush, but you're not likely to see the state tourism board publishing the Jack Malotte calendar any time soon. These same vistas also feature real-world uses of the land—open-pit gold mining, nuclear testing and Air Force surveillance, for starters. The artist also makes paintings about specific actions, such as the Western Shoshone Sacred Lands Association challenging the federal government to return the tribe members' ancestral land in the 1970s. He's worked with activists such as longtime indigenous rights defenders Carrie and Mary Dann, and Reno activist Bob Fulkerson, making posters for their causes and even logging one arrest during an anti-nuclear protest at the Nevada Test Site. (According to an essay by the NMA's Ann Wolfe, the artist considers this a feather in his cap: "As Malotte often likes to say, 'Remember, you're not an activist until you've been arrested.'")

Malotte delves into every subtlety he can find, resisting any simplistic "us-versus-them" setup. He paints a deep, complex picture of indigenous culture that's not likely to end up in the Nevada Indian Commission's calendar either. While he depicts people like the Dann sisters with reverence and love, he sometimes satirizes aspects of Native American life, for example, when he holds up a mirror to alcoholism in indigenous communities.

If this all sounds like a lot of subject matter to sort out, Malotte's retrospective is probably the best place to take it all in. While he is well known in Nevada, and excerpts of his work have been exhibited all over the West, there hasn't yet been a show that spans his entire career, and it's marvelous to look at decades worth of work by an artist who's taken such a close, honest look at Nevada. □

The Art of Jack Malotte opens June 6 at the Nevada Museum of Art, 160 W. Liberty St. Related events include "Sagebrush Heather: Jack Malotte in Conversation with Ann M. Wolfe" at 11 a.m. on June 8. Event tickets are \$10 for members, free for NMA members and tribal ID card holders.