



A few of "The Trees," sculptures that Galen Brown creates from recycled Christmas trees.
COURTESY/NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART

Taking time

Galen Brown

A brief biography provided by the Nevada Museum of Art describes Galen Brown's artistic process as "painstaking and often obsessive." He doesn't disagree, saying that a turning point during graduate school in the Bay area led to his decision to make works that are sometimes finished decades later.

"I realized at that time that the things I do would be more about spending time creating and doing the art throughout my life, instead of just producing product to sell to someone," Brown said. "I don't fit that realm."

Now living in Carson City, Brown has been working at his studio in Moundhouse getting his art ready for *Sine Cere*, a retrospective show at the Nevada Museum of Art. He's going to need a big truck for some of the art, which comes in all shapes and sizes and features the different mediums that Brown works in—sculpture, drawing, photography and printmaking. His work has been featured at the NMA before, as well as shows in Carson City and Las Vegas.

It will showcase Brown's distinctive take on art, which uses common materials and even what some people would call garbage to create something striking and unusual.

"I just use materials from life and try to keep my carbon footprint low," Brown said. "Just keeping it simple. The pencils I use are the same as in your office."

Growing up in Lake Tahoe informed Brown's work when he decided to pursue art. "My parents had a business in Tahoe," he said. "They had boat rentals in Kings Beach. That influences a lot of what I do. We were right there on the beach, so I'd stay at the lake all the time, and I'm sure that's where all this natural stuff comes from."

One series, called "The Waves," features hundreds of drawings on regular office paper that have been in progress since the mid-1990s. One of his most striking series, "The Trees," has been in production since 1988 and features dozens of Christmas trees that he's repurposed into art. He cuts the bark and limbs from the tree trunks and then sands those trunks down, adding other elements and then hanging them upside down in a gallery space.

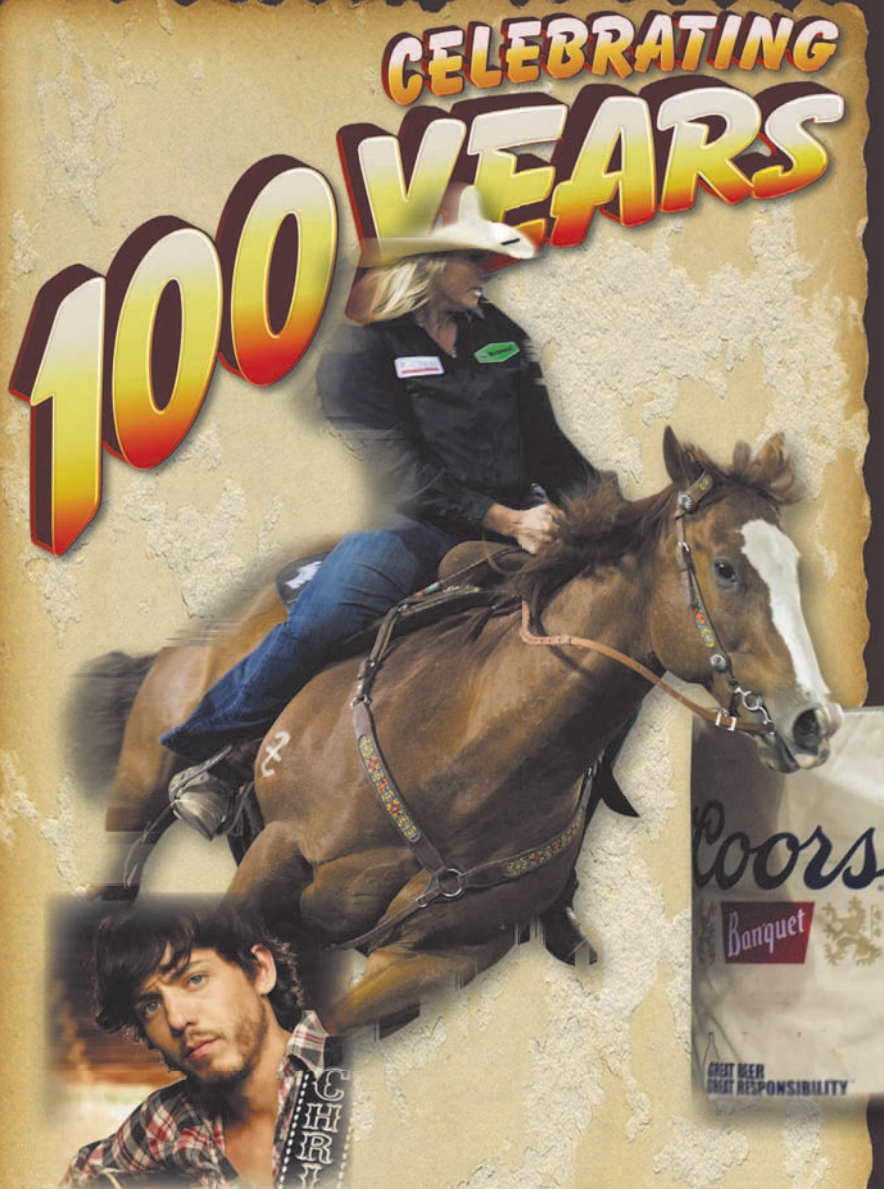
Though his work is non-traditional, Brown knows plenty about more formalized art. He earned a master's degree from the San Francisco Art Institute and also still works as a printmaker and a framer and a helper for installations with other artists.

"To support myself, I had a frame shop in Oakland, and that's where I started using the material that was left over from that," Brown said. "I was looking at all of this stuff that I accumulated and realized that I could utilize what was leftover."

It also creates what might be called happy accidents in Brown's art, as the large formats and recycled materials give his sculptures and drawings a character that's one-of-a-kind, even in his large series. "It starts to gain its own history within itself, within its own skin in a sense," Brown said of the individual pieces in his works. "Especially these big drawings, they've been scarred and have blemishes from moving them around and dropping things on them for over 20 years. It's not just pencil on paper."

"Part of the idea of spending all of this time on things, and even in the sets like 'The Trees,' is that you might be able to see the differences between all of them. Hopefully, it has an energy within itself. I don't know if it does for the viewer, but that's how I feel."

Sine Cere runs from June 22 to Jan. 5 in the Contemporary Gallery at The Nevada Museum of Art, 160 W. Liberty St. "Meet The Artist: Galen Brown on *Sine Cere*" takes place at 11 a.m. June 22 at the museum. Get more details at nevadaart.org.



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