



# Art, science converge to foster new perspectives

Amanda Horn 4:44 p.m. PDT June 24, 2015



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(Photo: Tim Dunn/RGJ)

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As I write these words, the Washington Fire rages near Markleeville. The 16,000-acre blaze threatens homes, fueling fears that similar scenarios will unfold this summer due to intensely dry conditions. Drought affects us all, one of many complex concerns touching our lives in ever-increasing, personal ways.



**RENO GAZETTE JOURNAL**  
Fire is 17,205 acres near Markleeville, 10% contained

Scientific innovation has shed light on how human activity impacts the natural world. Simultaneously, we've accelerated the depth of our footprint upon it. As the reliance on science has grown over the past century, so has faith in that discipline alone to provide solutions to global issues. Whereas science, arts, and the humanities were once inseparable, the 100-year trend toward divergence of these disciplines has left us with a collective tunnel vision.

Last weekend, a group of leaders in the arts, sciences, and humanities convened at the Nevada Museum of Art Center for Art + Environment (CA+E) for an intensive workshop aimed at reversing the insular dynamic. "ArtSciConverge" participants considered how to apply the various tools, worldviews and philosophies presented by each discipline to address social-ecological issues.

## TOP VIDEOS



**Courtney Love's taxi attacked in Uber protests**

00:45



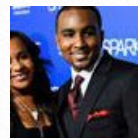
**Bobbi Kristina Brown being moved to hospice care**

00:47



**Lawsuit: Nick Gordon abused Bobbi Kristina, stole money**

01:33



**Lawsuit: Nick Gordon abused Bobbi Kristina, stole money**

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ArtSciConverge workshop attendees see integrated disciplines in practice at UC Berkeley Sagehen Creek Field Station near Truckee, California, Sunday, June 21, 2015. (Photo: Nevada Museum of Art)

Such integrated work reflects a primary area of interest for the CA+E, which supports the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. CA+E Director Bill Fox has a long history of connecting people across various disciplines. Much of the work being done in this vein is archived at the Center. Many exhibitions at the Nevada Museum of Art stem from these archives and the new work from which they result.

"A strong and enduring link between the arts, sciences, and humanities have existed since at least Classical Greece, if not earlier," said Fox. "They are inseparable. If you want to survive and thrive in the world, it takes all the tools at hand."



Faerthen Felix, assistant manager of UC Berkeley Sagehen Creek Field Station; artist Helen Mayer Harrison; and other ArtSciConverge participants enjoy conversation at Chez Louie at the Nevada Museum of Art, Friday, June 19, 2015. (Photo: Nevada Museum of Art)



**jazz group performs Saturday**  
Rick Ross arrested for kidnapping, assault  
June 25, 2015, 12:14 p.m.

00:57



**Breckenridge: The Black Mariah and the Kangaroo Arnie on his waxwork prank**  
Kourt  
June 20, 2015, 10:29 a.m.

02:21

June 20, 2015, 10:29 a.m.



Bobbi Kristina Brown moved to hospice care

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Mary Beth Leigh is associate professor of microbiology at the Institute of Arctic Biology and Department of Biology and Wildlife at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She is also a modern dancer, choreographer, and musician. Leigh served as the principal investigator of the National Science Foundation grant that supported ArtSciConverge. The workshop arose from a desire to network and coordinate efforts to integrate the arts, humanities, and science.

"I've worked in the arts and sciences simultaneously for most of my life and at a personal level these projects are very fulfilling," said Leigh. "I've often noticed how insular each discipline can be due to institutional structures and traditions, and it's exciting to promote communication across disciplines... Working jointly, the interactions can also reach the public in ways that science alone can't."



Jeff Brown, director of UC Berkeley-Central Sierra Field Research Stations, engages in ArtSciConverge discourse pertaining to the integration of arts, science, and humanities disciplines at the Nevada Museum of Art Center for Art + Environment, Friday, June 19, 2015. (Photo: Nevada Museum of Art)

One of the workshop coordinators, Frederick J. Swanson, has done much to advance this convergent trend. Swanson is a retired geologist with the USDA Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Station at Corvallis, and also professor (courtesy) with the Departments of Forest Ecosystems and Society at Oregon State University.

"Over the past century, ecology, the arts, and humanities diverged, but are now converging again, especially at sites of long-term, place-based ecological inquiry," writes Swanson in his "ESA Centennial Paper: Confluence of arts, humanities, and science at sites of long-term ecological inquiry."

"This convergence has been inspired in part by the works of creative, boundary-spanning individuals and the long-standing examples of arts/humanities programs in intriguing landscapes, such as artist and writer residencies of the National Park Service and the National Science Foundation's Antarctic program."

One such artist residency program is currently being developed by UC Berkeley's Sagehen Creek Field



Frederick J. Swanson, a retired geologist with the U.S. Forest Service, convenes the ArtSciConverge workshop at the Nevada Museum of Art Center for Art + Environment, Friday, June 19, 2015. (Photo: Nevada Museum of Art)

Station in partnership with the CA+E. Sagehen sits within a U.S. Forest Service Experimental Forest and Range north of Truckee, California. On the final day of the workshop, attendees journeyed to Sagehen to view integrated disciplines in practice. Jeff Brown serves as director of UC Berkeley-Central Sierra Field Research Stations; Faerthen Felix is Sagehen assistant manager.

"Data, knowledge, and information generation is typically where science ends," said Brown. "We need to create an empathetic reaction in people to move to policy and action."

"Art is about creating the emotional connection," said Felix. "Taking this integrated approach is critical to link the fundamental problem-solving capacity of art to the fundamental problem-solving capacity of science."

The Nevada Museum of Art, Donald W. Reynolds Center for the Visual Arts, E. L. Wiegand Gallery is the only art museum with a formal, long-term relationship with a research station (Sagehen), making the museum the perfect place to host ArtSciConverge. The seminar is the first step toward a larger, coordinated effort. Track the conversation on Twitter at #ArtSciConverge.

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