

# SANPETE 835-NEWS MESSENGER

Published by the Sanpete News Company - 35 S. Main St., Manti, UT 84642

## OPINION

- HOME
- NEWS
- OPINION
- LIFESTYLE
- PEOPLE NOTICES
- SCHOOL
- SPORTS
- SANPETE HAPPENINGS
- CONTACT

Subscribe!

Access the E-edition

Suicides in Sanpete Series

Sponsored Content: Local First

2019 Beautiful yard of Sanpete



Search this website ...

Search

Find us on Facebook

Special Publications

Sanpete County Telephone Directory

List your cell phone or other contact info in the Sanpete County Telephone Directory

EXTERNAL LINKS AND INFORMATION

Local Schools

Sanpete cities and towns

Visitor Information

Other Media



## Art Appreciation in America: What is Your Role? Another Look

By Darrin Jones  
10-3-2019

Each of us has a relationship with art based on instinctive taste. What appeals to us visually or emotionally, determines whether we value an artwork or not. This makes us all connoisseurs of our own predilections, and we exercise that judgment regularly. If you don't believe that you are particularly interested in art, look around your home. You have selected what decorates your environment — paintings, prints, sculptures, objects or photographs. You are in a very real and active sense, an art collector.

These inherent aesthetic appetites mustn't be diminished when we are told what is and isn't important by influential experts in the major art centers of New York or Los Angeles. Too often they rely unquestioningly on current trends.

If you doubt the verisimilitude of an institution's authority, or dislike an artwork that you think you *should* like—then trust your doubt, and decide for yourself. The contemporary art system—commercial galleries, auctions, museums, critics, buyers, dealers—doesn't appreciate dissent, because it threatens the flow of money and canonization that they control, and because art that it has made gospel would become vulnerable to righteous resistance. Houses of cards are built to collapse. By this measure the art hierarchy (particularly its conceptual element) is largely irrelevant to society because its guiding aim is to perpetuate its own insular concerns. It fails in its primary duty—to function as a conduit between genuinely significant, culturally compelling art, and the public it ought to be serving.

And yet engaging with the ideas behind the production of art, away from proselytizing factions can be immensely enjoyable and insightful. Some art does have the capacity to enrich, even though the particulars will vary for everyone. That is the strength of a democratization of taste. But it takes confidence not to merely accept the status quo. Even the act of transitioning from the street, through the door and into a quiet, pristine white gallery can be an uncomfortable experience for those unaccustomed to it. This—along with the environment within—is designed, to heighten the clinical reverence afforded the art on the walls, and keep discussion (or disagreement) hushed. But for the bold, there is much to be gained by going beyond famous names to find art that speaks to the

### RECENT HEADLINES

Anderson's Drug closes after more than 100 years as Ephraim Landmark

12/27/2019

Manti reconsidering zoning changes after input from businesses

12/27/2019

Religious freedoms for CUCF inmates made possible through volunteer service

12/27/2019

Gunnison committee considers three concepts for G-Hill renovation

12/27/2019

Lt. Gov. coming to Sanpete on campaign run

12/27/2019

Ephraim working to improve well production

12/27/2019

Manti Camp DUP honoring Crawford family

12/27/2019

Set down your roots at the 89 grill, and soak up some good food

12/27/2019

Casino Star Theatre opening with concert today, showing off 'Take a Seat' project

12/27/2019

Fairview treated water is just right for irrigation

12/27/2019

More Posts from this Category



personal, and there are creative practitioners in museums and galleries working to bridge that divide.

Residents of Sanpete County have access to a variety of art spaces of both local and national importance. Granary Arts in Ephraim is a welcoming entry point. Amy Jorgensen, co-founder and curator, understands that art at its best connects with the communities in which it is made, rather than alienating audiences with indulgent, unrelatable trifles that are so often the most visible and tiresome kind of contemporary art. Jorgensen has developed deft programming without allowing Granary's tone to become detached from everyday experience.

The Ratfink Museum in Manti is a magnificent testament to Ed "Big Daddy" Roth's antihero—an authentic commentary on American culture as any high art could claim to be. The antithesis of Disney's saccharine Mickey Mouse, Roth sank his abject junkyard wastrel into the greasy fabric of America's hotrod underbelly like a stain, and thankfully nothing can wash him out.

Spring City has a unique foothold in the region. Many artists live, work and show there, including painters Lee Udall Bennion and Randall Lake, and potter Joe Bennion. Pioneer artist Ella Peacock's (1905-1999) former home has been preserved and is a wonderfully atmospheric way to see her work. Further afield there is the Springville Museum of Art, and in Cedar City, the Southern Utah Museum of Art. Salt Lake City offers the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art; The Utah Museum of Fine Arts; the LDS Church History Museum, and the Rio Grande Depot (just one of many sites where Utah's public art collection can be seen.)

With the 1899 "Arts Bill" Utah became the first state in the nation to form an arts council, which is a magnificent achievement. It is surely incumbent on Utahns—both art workers and public—to continue that legacy as supporters of artistic production and conversation. Discover what has grown from that groundbreaking enterprise, and do so not only looking, but also discerning, challenging and questioning.

*Darren Jones is a Scottish art critic, curator and artist. His writing focuses on the art world and its systems, which he believes are too often insular, inaccessible and even hostile to the general public and even to art centers outside of New York. He is interested in decentralized and democratized coverage of contemporary art from across the United States that it might connect with and be relevant to wider audiences.*

*In June of 2019 Jones was resident critic at Granary Arts in Ephraim, where he met with artists, curators, writers and educators from across Utah to discuss how a networked, supportive art scene could increase Utah's role as a leader for contemporary art in America.*