



Scott, Chadd, "Underappreciated Adaline Kent exhibit coming to Nevada" *See Great Art*, January 15, 2023

ART IN THE WEST FEMALE ARTISTS

Underappreciated Adaline Kent exhibit coming to Nevada



BY CHADD SCOTT · JANUARY 15, 2023 · 0 COMMENTS



Adaline Kent, *Wellspring*, 1945. University of Missouri-Columbia.

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The Nevada Museum of Art will host the first retrospective exhibition of one of midcentury America's most innovative and underrecognized artists to occur in nearly sixty years in "[Adaline Kent: The Click of Authenticity](#)." The exhibition features approximately 90 works that span Kent's entire career and will be on display at the Museum from January 28, 2023, through September 10, 2023. The exhibition will occupy the entire second floor, charting major thematic developments in the artist's work, which progressed from figuration to abstraction.

Encompassing a diverse range of media, the exhibition includes drawings, original pictures incised on Hydrocal (a plaster mixture), sculptures both large and small, and a collection of terracottas — many of which have not been seen by the public in over half a century.

Adaline Kent (1900-1957) often wrote down many of her ideas on art, filling notebooks with her thoughts. In one poetic note entitled "Classic Romantic Mystic," dated April 17, 1956, Kent mused, "I want to hear the click of authenticity." The title for the exhibition takes its inspiration from this quote, underscoring the drive that propelled her forward in her work and life: to create art that expressed a unique approach to timeless subjects.

The expression of infinity emerges as an overarching theme in her work. In fact, Kent symbolically employed the looping symbol for infinity in many of her compositions. According to Apsara DiQuinzio, senior curator of contemporary art and organizer of the exhibition "...the infinity symbol, which she aligned with waterfalls and ski slopes, can be understood as a fusion of her interests in time, space, and nature. For Kent, the infinite was the wellspring of the growth and knowledge that led her to the discovery of her truth. It was what she experienced in the mountains, and it was what she hoped to express in her art."

Although Kent's work is not widely known today, she was featured in key 1940s and 1950s exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Bienal de São Paulo, and she exhibited with the [Betty Parsons Gallery in New York](#). She was a peer of artists such as Ruth Asawa, Isamu Noguchi, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still.

Adaline Kent was also a member of the San Francisco Bay Area's most productive mid-century artistic clan, which included Charles H. Howard, Madge Knight, John Langley Howard, Robert Boardman Howard, Henry Temple Howard, and Jane Berlandina. As a young Vassar graduate, she studied with Ralph Stackpole in San Francisco and with Emile-Antoine Bourdelle in Paris, where she lived for several years before finally settling in the Bay Area in 1929.

Bourdelle, who was known for his dynamic sculptures, would spark Kent's interest in movement and balance. This influence can be seen in the sculptures she made for the Court of Pacifica at the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939-40, a moment in her development when Kent's distinct style began to emerge. Movement was something Kent appreciated in sculpture and realizing the rhythms of her own body in space was likewise an important dimension of her own artistic practice. She kept gymnastic rings hanging in her studio, and her family reports that she utilized them regularly and with skill.

Physical movement, whether skiing or hiking in the mountains, dancing, or practicing on her rings, was something she thought about in relation to her art.

"To me, skiers, dancers, trapeze artist provide pleasure comparable to that of sculpture — an idea of form in space, space in form," Adaline Kent said. "Control in space, free yet disciplined in composition. The feeling of space and movement seem to be of the essence of our time."

A Legacy of Advocacy and Art

Adaline Kent grew up in the shadow of Mount Tampais, and into a family devoted to public service and environmentalism. Her mother, Elizabeth Thacher Kent, was an outspoken Suffragette who advocated for [women's right to vote](#). In 1911, thanks in part to her activism, California passed the Suffrage Amendment.

William Kent, her father, was a member of the U.S. Congress and a champion of land conservation. When Kent was eight years old, her parents donated land they had purchased to the U.S. Government in order to protect redwood forests from the logging industry and worked with President Theodore Roosevelt to create [Muir Woods National Monument](#).

Kent grew up with a love for the natural world which she shared with her husband Robert B. Howard. They often spent their summers exploring the High Sierra. Kent and Howard also spent winters skiing in the Tahoe region, often staying with close friend and fellow artist Jeanne Reynal, who had a house at nearby Soda Springs. They were among the first investors of Sugar Bowl Ski Resort, and Kent's brother-in-law, Henry Temple Howard, would design the first chairlift in California.

Kent was a self-admitted "addict of the High Sierra," and the landscape infused her work as she translated her experience of time and space in the mountains into aesthetic form. This makes the Nevada Museum of Art and the surrounding region an ideal context to showcase Kent's work.

"The Museum is honored to host the first retrospective exhibition of Kent's work that demonstrates her unique contribution to figuration, abstraction and surrealism on the West Coast in the United States," David Walker, CEO of the Nevada Museum of Art, said. "Her work is a vital part of our regional history and has been overlooked for far too long. The exhibition and the catalog it inspired will be a remarkable contribution to the scholarship and recognition of this exceptional, mid-century artist."