

Two L.A.-area artists make cut for Crystal Bridges exhibit

BY JESSICA GELT

Two Los Angeles-area artists have been selected for a high-profile exhibition at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Ark., titled "State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now," featuring 102 largely emerging artists ages 24 to 87.

San Pedro's Danial Nord, 53, and Santa Monica's Adonna Khare, 34, were among the 11 artists from California who made the cut. They were chosen from a group of nearly 1,000 artists that museum President Don Bacigalupi and assistant curator Chad Allgood visited while touring the country for 10 months, beginning in July 2013.

Like modern-day Alan Lomaxes, vetting contemporary art instead of folk music, Bacigalupi and Allgood made hundreds of hours of field recordings of the work they encountered in locales that were expected (Brooklyn, N.Y.) and unexpected (Manhattan, Kan.). They visited nearly eight artists per day, each for about 40 minutes to an hour.

"It was an exhausting, exhilarating and endlessly fascinating experience," Allgood said. "We have this incredible archive of what's happening in contemporary art right now."

Their criteria were straightforward and somewhat loosely defined.

"We looked for engagement with issues and narratives that underpin our everyday lives, as well as an ability to manipulate material in manifest or beautiful and accessible ways," Allgood said. "We talked a lot about appeal. Contemporary art is vital and important and can reach a wide audience; it's not hermetic, not closed, not purposefully obfuscating."

Nord's work stands out, Allgood said, because he is a person "deeply involved in perception and the body and the way those things are intrinsically linked through technology."

Khare is a different type of artist entirely. While Nord creates immersive installations using sculpture, light and sound, Khare simply draws. And what she draws are giant pictures of perfectly rendered animals in magical or surreal environments.

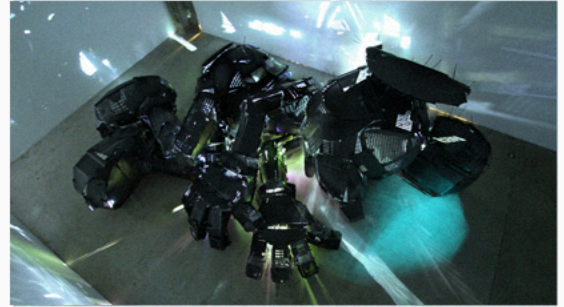
"Give her a big piece of paper and a pencil and she can be happy for weeks," Allgood said. "You walk into her studio and she's smudged with graphite, and her pictures are a call to action. She told me that when we lose these animals, we lose our humanity."

The studio visits were not high pressure or intimidating, said Nord, who worked as a designer- animator and scenic artist in the entertainment industry as well as a fashion designer before turning to experimental art in his early 40s.

"They were very warm people, so it was very comfortable," he said of Bacigalupi and Allgood.

Crystal Bridges was founded in 2011 by arts patron and Walmart heir Alice Walton.

"State of the Art" opens Sept. 13 and runs through Jan. 19.



CRYSTAL BRIDGES MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Danial Nord's "state of the art" features recycled television backs, electronics, video projectors, DVD player and sound system.