

Blowing Up the Art World

ANOTHER PLACE TO GO SEE ART IN SANTA FE? *Really?*

Turns out, this one is quite different. It's not a gallery, it's not a museum – it's an Art Container.

Veteran gallery owners Tonya Turner Carroll and Michael Carroll are reinventing the old museum/gallery paradigm, working as institutional peers, constantly pivoting from gallery to collector to institutional venue.

What that looks like is a new, 5,000 square-foot shipping container art space in the Baca that will be a venue for traveling museum exhibitions, that will show curated exhibitions from their collection, and that will be a creative exhibition space for invited artists from around the world.

As Tonya puts it, "This is a new and radical concept space, following the European art house approach, but where the artwork will be for sale, as well."

We tracked down the couple at Art Basel and, via Zoom, heard about how they're working to fix the art world.

Why do we need another space for art in Santa Fe?

Tonya: We're doing something a little different. The Art Container will be a venue to extend traveling museum shows, and we'll curate exhibitions from our collection as well as invite other galleries and artists from various parts of the world to create and show in the space.

There's no place now in Santa Fe – or any city that I can think of – that can, within a matter of months, bring a show that's ending a tour and extend its life in a new space. Institutions don't have the funding to do that, and they're backed up for years with upcoming exhibitions. If we see an exhibition and

The Turner Carroll Art Container is at 1226 Flagman Way in the Baca.

PHOTO MARY MOON; NEXT PAGES: CODE-RED,
CLARENCE HEYWARD AND THALASSA, SWOON





“We are moving away from the old gallery paradigm of a primary New York or West Coast gallery ‘owning’ an artist, calling the shots for what other galleries can show and when they can show it. Basically leaving other galleries with leftovers.”

don’t want it to end, if we want to amplify its voice, then we can go to New York tomorrow, and in three months show something that would otherwise disappear. There’s no other model like this.

And we have flexibility in what we show. In addition to extending an existing show, we will also have an unlimited collaborative space. We can invite artists in to do whatever they want; they can even create something totally new.

Michael: We are moving away from the old gallery paradigm of a primary New York or West Coast gallery “owning” an artist, calling the shots as to what other galleries can show and when they can show it. Basically leaving galleries with leftovers.

Tonya: We’re disrupting that whole model by partnering with other galleries. We can say, *Hey New York gallery, San Francisco gallery, we like your artist – we’re going to curate a show from both of your galleries, and nobody is going to be the primary dealer. We’re all going to be partners.*

Similar to the disruption that is happening in publishing and film, where middlemen are going away and creators are gaining power.

Michael: Exactly. Short-circuiting the old paradigm. And we’re incredibly excited to have found a piece of architecture that makes as much of a statement as breaking apart the art world rule book.

Tonya: When we work with another gallery for an artist, it’s not 1+1=2, it’s 1+1=10. The old paradigm of gallery representation is a system that was manufactured by a commercial interest, and that’s something we’re changing.

Michael: Have you seen Fendace, the collaboration between Fendi and Versace? There’s something in the moment, in our time, where people have snapped to this idea of collaboration.

What will people see in the Art Container?

Tonya: One of our first shows will be with Swoon. She was the first widely known female street artist and the first female artist to break into the NFT world. She’s a public practice artist who got her start by building a raft with her friends, sailing it across the Adriatic, and crashing the Venice Biennale. Swoon is the perfect person for us to give the space over to – she can turn it into the equivalent of a raft that sales into the Biennale. She’ll transform it into whatever she wants.

Michael: We’re also planning a show by Clarence Heyward, an incredibly powerful black artist from Brooklyn. That’s an example of a show that is touring until October, and then it goes away. But we but have the flexibility to pick it up and show it in Santa Fe, where it will be perceived differently than it would be in San Francisco, for instance. Context is everything, and our creativity as art workers is best used to enhance an artwork’s ability to be understood by as wide an audience as possible.

Tonya: We’ll also have Mokha Laget’s show when it ends at the American University in Washington, DC. She’s an amazing New Mexican artist who hasn’t gotten the attention she deserves.

Michael: We handle a lot of estates and can show those. We’ve had pieces by artists like Cy Twombly, Philip Guston, and Frank Stella. That work looks so much better when it knows its neighbor. To see the collection in context of each other – to see the eye of the collector – is fascinating.

Tonya: So it’s a wide variety of work. But there’s a theme – these all have a social justice or social practice perspective.



TOP: TURNER CARROLL ART CONTAINER BY GERALD CHAVEZ ARCHITECT, RENDERING BY KIRSTEN MILLER;
BOTTOM: *INTERSECTIONALITY*, MOKHA LAGET