



Artisans *of Las Vegas*

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Artisans Dar Freeland (left), Jennifer Gilbert, Larry Domsky, Barbara Domsky, Bob Donaghy, and Toni Craft pose at the L Maynard Galleries in Las Vegas.

These artists have found an inspiring home in Nevada.

As Las Vegas has grown in recent years, so has its arts community. Today hundreds of artisans, many of them newcomers, produce one-of-a-kind pieces using glass, clay, metal, and sand. Their work is displayed in increasingly upscale galleries throughout the city, including on the Strip and especially in the emerging downtown arts district.

The city offers artists many avenues of visual stimulation—the desert light, the neon panoramas—not to mention the encouragement of a growing population that can afford fine art.

“Las Vegas provides the space and freedom for me to explore many artistic interests,” says Dar Freeland, an animator and sand artist. Here, Freeland and a handful of

other Las Vegas artists discuss their work and influences. Their artwork, ranging in price from \$70 to \$50,000, is available through commission and at area galleries.

Art's Power DAR FREELAND

Los Angeles native Dar Freeland, who moved her company, Cricket Studio, to Las Vegas in 1994, works in film, animation, and illustration. But as a student of Buddhism, Freeland has a special interest in creating Tibetan-style mandala sand paintings, traditionally used as a meditation or prayer for healing.

Freeland sweeps away her sand mandalas, releasing them into the Pacific Ocean or the Virgin River to share their healing properties.



Dar Freeland demonstrates the chakpur she uses to create Tibetan mandalas. Behind is one of her illustrations. Below: Jennifer Gilbert with a metal table, footed bowl, and urn.

Building a mandala is a long and exacting process. Using a metal funnel called a chakpur, Freeland meditates as she places the colored sand one grain at a time on a 48-inch-square flat board. Creating traditional and nontraditional geometric designs and ancient spiritual symbols, Freeland takes 500 to 800 hours to complete each sand painting.

Of course, when it's completed, the painting can't be hung. Instead, Freeland sweeps her mandala into a container and, following the Tibetan belief that we are all connected by water, releases it into the Pacific Ocean or the Virgin River at Zion National Park to share the mandala's healing properties. She notes, "The final joy of the work is the acknowledgement of the impermanence of all things, from our beliefs to our bodies, to money and stuff."

Freeland's artwork can be seen at the Cricket Studio and Face Up Gallery in the Arts Factory and at www.faceupstudio.com.

Metallic Art

JENNIFER GILBERT

Like other artists, metal sculptor Jennifer Gilbert says Las Vegas and the Southern Nevada landscape foster creativity. "I have been inspired by the clean aesthetics of the Nevada desert," says the former New Yorker.

Gilbert, who started working with wood and plastic before switching to metal, learned the craft from designers in New York. Later she started urbanIron, which she moved to Las Vegas in 1998.

Gilbert makes small tables with tile tops, straight-back chairs, bed frames, and rugged cabinet hardware. She usually works in steel and sometimes in bronze or stainless steel. Her durable pieces reflect her expertise in welding and forging.

With studio scraps Gilbert makes urns, boxes, and sculpture. "Not One of Us" is an example of her latest sculptural pieces. "A friend of mine refers to it as a head on a stick," she says with a laugh. "Isn't feedback great?"

Another work, titled "Visionaerie," is a clustered ring of knotted and tangled metal bars supporting a small blackened-metal dome and golden spire. "With my current pieces I am pushing to see how far I can go with this idea," she says.

Gilbert's work can be seen at L Maynard Galleries in Las Vegas and on her Web site, www.urbaniron.com.

