Art is best appreciated in person

By Robert Schimmel

We boys escaped from the mountaintop to the flatland recently and it was a huge reminder of how much more one can gain from periodically, if not regularly, taking in an artist's original work and actually looking behind the veil of the usual presentations in a book or on a website.

Case in point, my dear friend David and I made the trek to the Crocker Museum in Sacramento to view, in particular, the Edgar Payne exhibit. So, why spend the time, gas, etc., to go "face to image" when there are so many alternative and easier ways? Glad you asked.



Robert Schimmel

Without going too deeply into the after effects of such a simple journey and effort, I find two predominant reasons surfacing. First, the very act of looking and searching the real – not virtual – painting, sculpture, etc., puts me in the artist's frame of reference or shoes, so to speak, to the degree that I can feel the size and form of the piece as it relates to the actual subject matter, actually see and sense the individual imprints or brushstrokes that may pound or caress the canvas or clay, and absorb the elements of design (color, texture, line, space, etc.) as well as the principals that govern their use (like scale, unity, rhythm, contrast,

balance, and so forth.)

Second, and perhaps most important, are the relationship and exchange of ideas that occur during such a journey to and confrontation with the chosen artwork. This is the all too infrequent alone and focused time spent with another artist (David, in my case) or non-artist that isn't under the guise of art reception etiquette or gatherings that are either limited by time or harried by constant social interruptions.

Good quality museum exhibits, such as this one, generally offer quite a variety of ways to experience the artist and his/her art that transcend the simple one dimensional viewing experience of a book, poster, or web site. Instead of flipping or clicking pages, one is walking to and fro around and up close to literal history and real handmade objects and surfaces. Texture, line and color speak loudest while the artist's intent and emotional purpose slowly coalesce for the viewer into an ever-clarifying voice that may or may not be a chorus of personal meaning. You can even get a recorded tour in such exhibits to follow and learn some of the more obscure facts re the artist and certain pieces that bring an earthy and intimate connection not possible otherwise. Similarly, seeing two men beat each other silly on TV or, God forbid, shoot one another on a newscast, is a far cry from being within sweat or blood spattering distance and having the anger or fear literally permeate your being. Same thing here, only hopefully more peaceful and edifying in an art exhibit setting or live art demonstration.

Witnessing the progression and evolution of a serious, dedicated artist's work over many years is truly an honor, and the lessons learned or paradigms changed that come to light under such an auspicious setting are often quite profound for artist and voyeur alike. Take Edgar Payne – one of California's most gifted early plein air painters – his work was large, bold and tight prior to visiting Europe in the early 1920s, but there he became influenced by the

Impressionists and their broader, less detailed approach. This changed his work and style forever, and we witnessed as well as felt the impact on his life and the tensions in his work. The power of his images and the forces of transition would just not be apparent or tenable from any other kind of venue or presentation.

My personal belief, especially as an artist, is that such an all encompassing, firsthand view of a body of original work will take me inside myself and make me question and quantify aspects of my own life and work unlike any other experience. Add to that the ear and feedback from another artist, or respected opinion without inhibitions, and the ingredients for a fabulous eye opening and uplifting exchange are in place.

May your gallery-hopping and art appreciation take on new excitement or meaning and become more frequent.

Robert Schimmel is a professional artist and teacher in South Lake Tahoe as well as host of "Lake Tahoe Art Scene" on KTHO radio on Thursdays at 5:15pm.

Why is the loop road project on the South Shore a good or bad idea?

Loop road opponents dominate SLT council meeting

By Kathryn Reed

If the loop road project were completed, will a section of South Lake Tahoe become a ghost town as drivers avoid a significant commercial segment of town, or will it stimulate the economy?

If Highway 50 and city streets in the Stateline area were left as they are, will this be good or bad for the city financially?

Plenty of people have an array of opinions, but no hard facts have come forward to put substance to their thoughts.

On Tuesday night the South Lake Tahoe City Council got an earful about what people think about the proposal that would eliminate 88 dwellings where 245 people live. Thirteen businesses would be affected in some way. “Affected” has yet to be defined. No residents or businesses in Nevada would be relocated.

All of this would be so traffic on Highway 50 would be rerouted through a neighborhood on the mountain side behind Harrah’s and MontBleu, with the idea it would provide a more walkable, scenic area in the Heavenly Village-casino corridor areas.



Businesses in South Lake Tahoe are making it known how they feel about the loop road. Photo/LTN

The May 29 evening workshop was intended to give the public an opportunity to weigh-in with their thoughts about this project that is being driven by the Tahoe Transportation District – not the city, not Douglas County, and neither state transportation agency.

More than 50 people attended the meeting.

What was not pointed out is TTD can go forward with the project, even if the council never gives its blessing, as long as eminent domain is not required.

Of the 26 people who spoke, five were in favor of the project, 13 against and eight were not definitive in their stance. However, of those eight, more were critical than supportive.

Eleven letters were submitted, though not read into the record despite the writers asking for that to happen. All were against the project.

Bill Cherry, an attorney representing a business owner in the project area, handed the council members a petition with 106 signatures from business people who are against the loop road.

Terry Hackett, who is the controlling partner of the Village Center, said he has yet to formulate an opinion.

“We’ll review the economic impacts,” Hackett told the council.

But no one has commissioned a thorough economic analysis.

The environmental documents that will be prepared for the loop road will include an economic component, but not a substantive one that addresses some real concerns the city would have. This is because the loop road is a transportation project, not an economic stimulus project.

The South Shore Vision Plan, the proposal that would revamp the highway from Ski Run Boulevard to Kahle Drive, does have an economic feasibility component. Carl Ribaudo with SMG Marketing is putting that study together. He is also one of the people who spoke at the special council meeting in favor of the loop road.

However, the impacts to businesses in the loop road area that would not be demolished and/or relocated are not being studied. This was part of Hackett’s point.

If the road were rerouted, people would go behind his shopping center where there is no signage. He added had a loop road been proposed in 1980 when he bought what was then known as the Crescent V Center, he would not have done so.

Pete MacRoberts, who operates the Holiday Inn Express, said there is no way guests can merely use the Carrows driveway.

Randy Vogelgesang, South Tahoe Public Utility District’s board liaison to the city, said, “A lot of time infrastructure is relocated at our expense and that is passed on to ratepayers.”

How other utilities – like gas, electric, telephone and cable – would be affected and the residual impacts on ratepayers has not been brought forward to the public.

The council never intended to take action Tuesday. But most have strong feelings.

“I don’t support using eminent domain again,” Councilman Hal Cole said.

People intimately familiar with eminent domain spoke – like Lou Pierini who went through it with other redevelopment projects.

“Of the 100 businesses displaced, I’m the only one left,” he told the council.

“I think the council needs to make a decision early,” Councilman Bruce Grego said. He wants the council to take a vote in the fall before the process is dragged out any longer and more money is spent.

Tahoe Transportation District has money to get through the design process – of which 10 percent is done. It’s estimated the project could cost $70 million to build – of which about half is projected to be spent on acquisition and relocation of property and people. However, not a penny of that money has been secured.

A relocation plan is expected to be released any day. Comments on it will be taken for 30 days. If the project goes forward, rights of ways and relocation could begin in 2014.

Councilwoman Angela Swanson said, “To me this is a huge land use piece for the city. We need to see if it pencil’s out.” She wants to look at the broad vision of the city instead of viewing the loop road as an isolated project.

Paul Genasci, whose office is not in the project area, said, “This town does not just exist in the casino corridor.” He said complaints from tourists are about blight, not the congestion in the casino corridor. He questions if tourists have been asked what they think since the project appears geared to improving the tourist experience.

Dominic Acolino, general manager for Embassy Suites, said his

guests are frustrated with the infrastructure on the South Shore. He mentioned how he suggests they go to Van Sickle Bi-State Park, but warns them to be careful because there are no sidewalks.

What he failed to mention is if the loop road project he supports goes through, a state highway will go in front of the only bi-state park in the country.

Jay Kniep believes the environmental gains touted from the project could be achieved without rerouting the road, just like they were with the Heavenly Village project. He also questions the old studies being used that call for an increase in traffic on the highway when in fact the reality is fewer vehicles are on the road.

The draft environmental documents are expected to be released this fall. The soonest construction could begin is 2016.

S. Lake Tahoe council skips headhunter; Kerry city manager for at least 90 days

Nancy Kerry will be city manager of South Lake Tahoe at least until Oct. 1.

The City Council at a special meeting Tuesday night voted 4-1 to put Kerry, who is current assistant city manager until Tony O’Rourke leaves at the end of June, in the top job. Councilman Tom Davis was the lone dissenter. He favored a full search for the next city manager.



Nancy Kerry

The council also on May 29 on a 5-0 vote hired Ralph Anderson & Associates to perform a background check on Kerry. This was one of four firms who earlier this month gave presentations to the council with a desire to become the headhunting firm to find the next city manager. The fee will not exceed $2,000.

Kerry, who was not at the meeting because she is on vacation, will have her interim contract on the June 5 agenda. She will be making $2,000 more a month starting July 1 – for what would be $141,240 a year. (O’Rourke makes $175,000.)

– Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County judges told to follow the law, not make their own

By Denny Walsh, Sacramento Bee

The El Dorado County judiciary's penchant for doing things its own way has run afoul of a state appeals court.

The bottom-line question before the higher court was: Can judges ignore a law they don't like and make their own rule?

A resounding "No" was the answer from the Sacramento-based 3rd District Court of Appeal.

El Dorado Superior Court adopted a local rule mandating that all misdemeanor defendants be present at what is usually the last in-court proceeding before trial. It is called a "readiness and settlement conference," and it is "the last possible point of negotiation," at which a defendant either agrees to a plea deal or defense counsel and the prosecutor announce they are ready for trial.

The judges in El Dorado County decided the absence of the defendant precludes a meaningful conference because no settlement is possible without the acquiescence of the accused. They argue that if a defendant says on the day trial is set to begin that he will accept a plea bargain, valuable resources have been wasted, including a jury pool summoned to the courthouse and trial preparation by the district attorney's office.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Unnatural forests are depleting water supply

By Helen M. Poulos and James G. Workman

Ronald Reagan once justified logging with “a tree is a tree; how many more do you need to look at?” Besides, he warned, “trees cause more pollution than automobiles.” We cringed at his biases. Yet due to forces none foresaw, Reagan’s gaffes may now ring true.

Today, the hottest and thirstiest parts of the United States are best described as over-forested. Vigorous federal protection has stocked semiarid regions of public land with several billion trees too many. And day after day these excess trees deplete a natural resource that has become far more precious than toilet paper or 2-by-4’s: water.

Scientists and water managers report that 39 states face water scarcity. Much of the nation’s freshwater shortfall comes from our population growth, waste, hunger and contaminants. But we must also now implicate the escalating thirst of unnatural forests.

Water depletion from afforestation — the establishment of trees or tree stands where none previously were — is the unintended consequence of a wildly popular federal policy. For millenniums, fires set by lightning or Native Americans limited forest stocks to roughly a few dozen trees per acre. All that changed after the nationally terrifying Big Blowup wildfires of 1910, which led the United States to in effect declare war on wildfire. The government’s wartime-like tactics included security watchtowers, propaganda, aerial bombing and color-coded threat alerts. Uncle Sam trained elite Hotshot and

Smokejumper crews to snuff out enemy flames. Congress annually funded the war effort with an emergency blank check, now $2.5 billion.

Helen M. Poulos is a fire ecologist and postdoctoral teaching fellow at Wesleyan University's College of the Environment. James G. Workman, a former wildland forest firefighter, is a visiting professor at Wesleyan and the author of "Heart of Dryness".

Read the whole story

Burning Man knock-offs gaining in popularity

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

For years, the organization behind the counterculture festival Burning Man has been urging participants to live year-round by the ideals espoused during its weeklong occupation of the Nevada Black Rock Desert.

A sudden ticket shortage just might be kicking that effort into high gear.

Two weekends ago, as many as 800 people descended on a private makeshift campground in this Modoc County town for Lunar Burn – a first-year event loosely patterned after Burning Man.

"This event wasn't about re-creating Burning Man. It's about showing it to new people," said Tom Michael, one of the principal organizers.

After years of steady, unrestrained growth, Burning Man sold

out for the first time in 2011. The population of festival-goers is capped by the federal Bureau of Land Management, which owns the dry lake bed that is turned into a temporary solar- and gas-powered city around Labor Day.

This year, using a new lottery program for ticket sales, the event was besieged with interest. The lottery concluded with less than a quarter of regular attendees scoring one of the 58,000 tickets available and many questioning whether the influx of new people would lead to the event's demise.

Colfax artist Jim Bowers was one of the lucky ones who got a ticket. But with the vast majority of his "tribe" ticketless, he's decided to raffle it off.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County girl completes SF Bay swim

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

Nine-year-old Jordan Freer succeeded in her swim from Alcatraz to San Francisco on Memorial Day.

The third-grader from Lotus in El Dorado County is one of the youngest people to make the swim. Her father, Tom, who swam with his daughter, said all went well.

"Tough conditions but they were met with determination," he said of his spunky daughter who swam with several hundred adults in the 1.5-mile organized swim.

Jordan has been on a swim team since she was 4 years old. To

prepare for Monday’s swim, she trained at Folsom Lake.

Jordan’s swim was a fundraiser for Nothing But Nets, which distributes insecticide-treated nets to families throughout Africa.

Development vs. conservation in Utah ski country

By Sallie Dean Shatz, New York Times

SALT LAKE CITY – The Wasatch Range, towering over an arid, urban sprawl of a million people, provides two important assets that are increasingly at odds – a vital supply of water for residents and pristine snow for a ski industry that rakes in $1.2 billion a year.

Now, two competing bills in Congress are setting up a new skirmish in the West’s perennial battle between conservation and development.

One bill, involving an ambitious project known as SkiLink, was filed by Representative Rob Bishop, a Republican from northern Utah. It would allow developers to bypass some jurisdictional and environmental protections to build a gondola linking the base of the Solitude ski area in Salt Lake County and the upper part of the Canyons ski area in Summit County.

The bill would override some federal and local restrictions on ski areas in the Wasatch Range and would require the United States Forest Service to sell 30 acres of public land to accommodate SkiLink.

The competing bill, the Wasatch Wilderness and Watershed Protection Act, was created after two years of public meetings and was introduced by Representative Jim Matheson, a Democrat who represents the area. It would preserve the same tract of Forest Service land for its “wilderness quality” and watershed.

For more than 100 years, the towering range has been protected as a watershed. Expansions of ski areas in the central Wasatch are not allowed under multiple jurisdictional management plans, which the resorts say inhibit their ability to compete.

Ski areas now cover 6,294 acres of the central Wasatch, though Bishop’s legislation could create a legal precedent that could pave the way to more than double that, encompassing the watershed’s headwaters and affecting Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons, which are home to four ski areas and supply 60 percent of Salt Lake City’s water.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe SWAT team adds Humvee to arsenal of tools

In 1986, when the Humvee was brand new, the price was $173,000.

In 2012, the used Humvee cost the South Lake Tahoe Police Department zero dollars. It came to the department from the military.

South Side Auto Body painted it for free.



South Lake Tahoe Police Department's latest toy. Photo/LTN

Some cash will be put out by the department to equip it the way they want it so it can be used by the SWAT team. This will be the department’s first armored vehicle.

Officer Travis Cabral told *Lake Tahoe News* the special windshield that is on order weighs 100 pounds. He said the whole vehicle has been overhauled, has an engine with 4,000 miles and all new tires.

Police Chief Brian Uhler said it’s already been used to rescue a climber off Twin Peaks. Without the Hummer, rescue crews would have had to carry the injured woman out on a stretcher. The vehicle got her down faster and easier.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report