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St. Louis native Larry Krone examines craftsmanship, identity in 'The Best, Best Everything'

By ÁINE O'CONNOR (/PEOPLE/INE-OCONNOR) • OCT 2, 2015

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Director of Sheldon Art Galleries Olivia Lahs-Gonzales joined
artist Larry Krone to discuss Krone's exhibit at the Sheldon,
"The Best, Best Everything."

CREDIT AINE O'CONNOR | ST. LOUIS PUBLIC RADIO

Nationally-known multimedia artist Larry Krone grew up in St. Louis, but has not returned for a major exhibition of his work since 2006. On Friday, Oct. 2, that changes when the Sheldon Art Galleries opens an exhibition of his pieces, which combine found textiles, graphics and craft materials with his own artistic stamp.

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Larry Krone's art is collaborative, using craft work from anonymous hobbyists. Olivia Lahs-Gonzales, director of the Sheldon Art Galleries, says that it raises questions about artistic ownership and authorship.

'Multimedia' art usually refers to video and audio installations, but Krone uses it to describe the vast collection of materials he manipulates in his work. "I started primarily as a visual artist and make objects and things using found materials, and over the years it sort of branched out into music, and I've been doing costume design and some fashion stuff, too...So multimedia does describe these days what I'm doing."

In his exhibit at the Sheldon (http://www.sheldonconcerthall.org/current-exhibits.php), "The Best, Best Everything," Krone uses found craft projects: works either finished or unfinished, given to him or snagged in thrift stores and sales. The projects are "things that people do, either just to pass the time or maybe not with much attention," he explained. "But I take all these things and put them together and then I add my own workmanship."

Krone attaches scraps of these crafts together, adding his own pops of color and texture in the form of sequins and graphics. "In this way, I'm sort of using the content of all those other people--the idea that these things came from all over the country—and who knows where, different eras, and making this sort of collaboration between all of us. A symbolic one, at least."

Krone said this way of collaborating with unknown artists allows their tastes and inspirations to shrine through his assumption of their work. Much of his work focuses on questions of identity: the identities of the people who crafted the pieces which he combines and manipulates in addition to his own, as an artist and as an individual.

"He uses the element of chance, and using other people's artwork, so to speak...so he doesn't feel it necessary to completely be the single, sole author. And I think that's part of it, as well," said Olivia Lahs-Gonzales, director of the Sheldon Art Galleries.

"The Best, Best Everything" speaks well to the sense of multiple and diverse ownership in Krone's art, and to the bright, various patterns that characterize it. "I thought that the title would make people think of abundance and just, sort of like, too much stuff, tons and tons of great stuff, and that's sort of what the show looks like to me." The entire exhibit, Krone said, is thick with spangles and knickknacks and personal touches.

The centerpiece of the exhibit is a floor-length cape crafted from found projects, an "object of decadence" made of hundreds of embroideries patched together and covered with sequins and extra detail. The cape is wearable, Krone said, but first and foremost is a statement about authorship, craftsmanship and identity.

"Really, the piece stands as an art piece for people to look at--but for me it's something very personal," Krone said. "I mean, I spent two and a half years working on that...and I spent a lot of time with every individual piece."

The exhibition at the Sheldon is working in tandem with other local galleries to showcase Krone's work, including Craft Alliance, with its "Innovation in Textiles 10" symposium, and projects+gallery (http://www.projects-gallery.com/current-exhibition/) in the Central West End, in an exhibition entitled "Larry Krone – The Selling Sound of Country," which also opens Oct. 2.

The Sheldon Art Galleries also features St. Louis painter Julie Malone, a traveling exhibit of indigenous photography, and an exhibit of children's musical instruments designed and constructed by students in the Sheldon's STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) program.

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CREDIT LARRY KRONE

(http://www.news.stlpublicradio.org/people/erica-smith)and Kelly Moffitt (http://news.stlpublicradio.org/people/kelly-moffitt). The show is sponsored in part by the Missouri Arts Council (https://www.missouriartscouncil.org/), the Regional Arts Commission (http://art-stl.com/), and the Arts and Education Council of Greater St. Louis (http://www.keeparthappening.org/).

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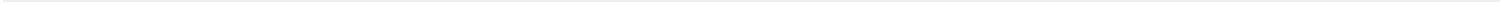(/post/marilynne-bradley-paints-preserves-local-landmarks-once-upon-time-st-louis)

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