Nicolas Baird

I was born in Tucson and moved to Rancho Linda Vista with my parents, Selina Littler and Imo Baird, when I was three years old. An artist and professional biologist, I started seriously making art when I was in high school, taking photographs of the desert around the Ranch and in the foothills of Oracle. This immediate connection with the natural world has been essential to my art practice and has inspired my biological research (which is currently on mammalian evolution). I am interested in dreams, poetry, language, the very large, the very small, and finding new ways of drawing meaning out of mundane experiences. The media I work with includes photography, sculpture, printmaking, writing, painting, and performance, a diversity that grew directly from the support of the Ranch community. Although I currently live in Berlin, I visit regularly and for extended periods. I have always considered the Ranch home.

Among my pieces in this show is a constellation made from the ground-up dust of a cow scapula. I found the bone in the hills near the Ranch while on a hike with my father and, when I am away, I think often of the clear Milky Way in the sky above Oracle. There is another painting of the sunset after a monsoon from the roof of my parents’ home and the story of a dream carved into clay. On their own, these pieces are disconnected, almost fragments, but here perhaps, surrounded by the art of the community that raised me, the connections become clear.

Just After Sunset form the Roof of HE
casein and spray paint on canvas
on loan from the Charles Sternberg Collection

Record of the Night
ceramic
on loan from the Sharon Brady Collection

Pleiades (Messier 45), Bonedust
acrylic and bone on canvas
on loan from the Littler-Baird Collection
The dream started and I found a church with one of the most beautiful dream sequences. Remember a giant turtle in the middle of the church and the whole room was hung with fabric. It's something I knew was something else. I was inside the room and冬奥梦开始时，我发现自己在一个教堂里，有一个最美丽的梦镜。记得一只巨大的乌龟在教堂的中央，整个房间都挂着布。这是我所知道的，但它是另一件事。我是在房间里，但我......
The dream shifted and I found a church with one of the most beautiful dream sequences. I remember a giant tree or, in the middle of the church, and the whole room was hung with fabric. I knew something spiritual was alive in this room, and in me, I felt so confident in myself. My strength and being, and I knew I would—despite my fear and previous difficulties in dreams—be able to fly at will. I thought and took flight. I soared around the room, tumbling, twisting, using the fabric as an anchor and pivot in my related dance around the enormous tree. I felt we were communicating fully, this tree and I. Soon, I heard noises in the adjacent, smaller entrance room and I went to investigate—it was a boy with long hair, and I knocked him out by flying into him. When he awoke he put his hand on me and the dream shifted again. This time Amalita was in the large room, washing something. Angry, I came in and to distract and cheer her, I danced. My best ballet. I was channeling my flight on solid ground. I was Juliet and Romeo at once. It was the best I've ever danced.
It started with a dream, in it I was making a small family of people and animals from old wood. Therefore, the challenge was to start making them in real life. Being neither a carpenter nor engineer, I had problems getting things to stand up right and stay that way. In the years since, I have gradually learned how to do that, but I still like to start with stacking things up, and eventually arrive at some sort of manageable off-balance. Rarely is any piece planned out ahead of time. Meanwhile, the pieces have become a large family, with some relatives more baroque, some more minimal or abstract, but always using discarded materials held together with whatever is nearby. The elements of each piece help determine the form, and parts often remain recognizable within their new structure. Re(con)figuring trash into art, a different kind of useless junque.

Although I knew about the Ranch, was acquainted with some of the artists, and had my sole art class at the UofA co-taught by Ruby Lee (Charles Littler and Pat Dolan), I had only visited RLV a couple of times. I came to the Ranch with family, as family, married to Charles’ daughter Selina, and father of his grandson. In the nearly 25 years since, it has become my home, where I have lived far longer than anywhere else. Selina and I are still in the same house, the one she spent many of her younger years in; our son Nic’s childhood happened there. Now, I wear several different hats at the Ranch, I make art and music and have spread out into the wider community of artists and kindred that has grown up in Oracle. Rambling the surrounding desert hills is a cherished pastime. However, I work in Tucson, coming down Linda Vista Road in the afternoon and seeing the west open out is a welcome reward. That is where family is, all of us there in community keeping the place in good order. The Ranch offers space both physical and psychic to get work done. There is always more to do.

Chairwell Tower
found wooden chairs and objects

 Totem Head
wood with found objects

Trophy Head, Queen of the Wolf Rats
found objects
James G. Davis

Like so many artists before him, James G. Davis was keenly aware of the culture in which he lived. His love for opera, poetry and literature was surpassed only by his love of great art and the tradition behind it. Like the great artists of this century and those past, Davis used all of his cultural awareness combined with a highly personal view of the world to form unique visual statements. With artists eyes he saw the world from his internal perspective and created images that seem to pull at the attention of a viewer, like a homeless beggar catches the corner of our vision on a busy street; a constant reminder of reality as it really exists. It does not stop there either. Davis took us to the brink of fear and the dark passions of the unconscious and then to the other side of reality as seen through the looking glass of our minds eye. However, even amid the loneliness and separations of his figures, there is a glimmer of hope and beauty which he found and conveys so as to push us forward to the next step, the next day, the next level of awareness. It is this latter quality in his work that gives it a universal appeal; that amid the catharsis’ and the enigmas of life, there is hope through perseverance. Davis used the artistic tradition to transcend the ordinary and broke from it to create informed autobiographies that may help us to understand the essence and complexities of the soul of man.

James came to Rancho Linda Vista in 1970 with his wife, Mary Ann. It was a wonderful place to work and raise his family. He taught at the University of Arizona for 20 years mentoring and inspiring many students, several of whom still visit the ranch.

James G. Davis passed away in September 2016. He leaves behind a legacy of picture making that continues to amaze and challenge new generations of viewers.

The Anteater
oil on masonite

White Boots
etching
White Boots: Ghost of the San Manuel Mine
Poem by William Pitt Root

As you know, Jim, I did work underground in the same mine you’ve imagined in your studio: half a mile down, taking wages enough to make it to California and fool’s gold enough to remind me I don’t know much after all.

New guys like myself – still thrilled by the dangers of fire or falling through the dark into a hole followed by twenty tons of dusty rumbling ore-, we all tried to stay alert each minute of the eight-hour shift.

And for a week or two, alert we were, then habit made us carless as the rest so we’d pocket our safety glasses, let dust masks dangle from our necks and sometimes catch each other stepping out across open shafts without first snapping our lanyards to the rusty cables overhead.

The buddy system wasn’t much observed, so like the rest come break time I’d kick back alone against the stone wall and light up, flicking my headlamp off so the dark expanded, flooding gently through my eyes. In the distance, sometimes, a solitary hunched figure projecting its small edge of light would glide by my line’s entrance tiny as a fly in a tear of amber from where I watched, invisible and isolate as a stone in outer space, or inner space. Just some guy.

Never saw old White Boots in those days but often thought how all those men just lost in the Sunshine Mine must have felt – poor bastards who lived long enough to feel, long enough to lose everything in their minds but hope before their air was gone, long after their light. You’d have to kill your light to keep from igniting whatever gasses might be seeping from walls so dark is where you’d be, whether by yourself or in the company of others. In such a dark I had no need of White Boots, my friend but looking at his image, startling, almost comic, you’ve drawn from the dark of blinding inks and your own heart familiar with disaster I’m reminded now of how it is the living keep hold of the things that blind them to those gone – how gypsies, when a loved one’s dying, will help the one failing stay just a little longer by turning a wooden chair upside down to hold between them. On one leg a live hand, the dying on another, until, ready, it falls free. But the thing is the clasp itself across that final distance, how it allows those last things that need saying to be said. That’s how it’s always seemed to me, with art I mean. Whether it’s paint on canvas or ink on a page, it’s the chance for what knows it must die in us to join what knows it will live forever. And knowledge from such a common depth only survives in the light as shadow, as White Boots, imago, as a way, meanwhile, to stay in touch while the sun burns on.
Mary Anne Davis

I came to Rancho Linda Vista in 1970 with my husband James G. Davis. Our son, Turner, was born the following year. I taught arts and crafts at San Manual High School for 30 years and consider myself an artist/seamstress. The two pieces shown in this exhibition are part of my Quilt series using paper, cloth and sewing techniques.

Quilt I
Quilt II
mixed media on paper
NFS
Turner Davis

I have been drawing since I was a little kid. I used to follow my parents, James and Mary Anne Davis, around museums and made rudimentary sketches from canvases of the old masters. I used to watch my father draw and I discovered early on a doorway to parallel worlds scrawled into notebooks. Drawing saved me from the worst of teenage angst and served as a way forward when it seemed there was none. From drawing came painting.

When I am at my best, my pictures skate along a crumbly edge between autobiography and the fantastic. I try to gently examine those places where the pleasure and burden of the body intersect with the lightness of dreams and nightmares.

I believe in being badly proficient and love exploring different styles and iconography.

The Lion
charcoal on canvas

The House
ink on paper attached to board

Shooting into the Void
ink on paper
Pat Dolan

I came to Rancho Linda Vista in 1979 as a visiting artist from Chicago. I stayed for 15 years, began an art partnership Rubylee with Charles Littler that continued till his death in 1991. Charles and I collaborated on site sculpture, performance art, installations and community. During my years living at RLV, I was the board president, began the visiting artist program, hosted yearly Halloween parties for the kids and discovered the beauty of the wild landscape that surrounded RLV. Instead of pigeons, I met many hawks, ravens and owls.

May You Live With Ease
encaustic and cold wax on panel

Living at Rancho Linda Vista supported my ongoing practice as an artist. Besides collaborating with Charles on Rubylee projects, I continued to draw the beauty of the surrounding landscape in pastels. What I learned living in the community I have also given back in my teaching at The Drawing Studio. I no longer live at RLV but I feel a part of the larger extended Ranch family. Besides showing my artwork in the Barn Gallery, I often act as the celebrant of marriages and celebrations of life of the residents of RLV. My interest in what happens when we die is reflected in this pastel as well as my connection to the jaguar.

Corazon’s Journey Home
ink and pastel on paper
Matthias Düwel

I first became aware of Rancho Linda Vista through my wife, Emily Stern Düwel. Her parents helped found the ranch, so she spent time there as a child and always felt a strong connection to the place.

10 years before our move to Arizona in 2004, we spent nearly each August on the Ranch, which was a welcome and rejuvenating break from our very busy NYC life. We have gotten to know many of its members.

After 9/11, life in NYC became more stressful, so almost 15 years ago, when a house became available, we applied for it and took a wild leap of faith by moving to Oracle. I was fortunate enough to get a full-time faculty position at Pima Community College in 2005, where I still teach today.

Beyond being a serious practicing artist, I do not consider myself as having a specific role within the Ranch community. I do believe that the work I do at Pima College services a vital need in the larger community of Southern Arizona. Being an art educator is both challenging and satisfying at the same time. I am hoping to have opened the eyes of the thousands of students who have come through my classes. That said, everyone who lives on the Ranch pitches in: I manage the summer artist residency, help with promotion and hanging shows, and occasionally fill potholes.

Having lived all my life in large metropolises, our move here was a dramatic change and the first few years were hard for me as an artist. I felt somewhat lost, but I eventually became quite aware of developments and the possibilities of expanding on the multitudes and repetitive excesses found here. The subject of my art started changing from urban destruction to, what is ultimately even worse, the destruction of our environment. My focus broadened to similar global phenomena and their repercussions, to issues like the mass diaspora of people brought on by wars or natural disasters.

Maybe the seeming stability of the Ranch brought the constant instability around us more into focus.

The 12 pieces from the Irwanderungen series exhibited here are the most recent manifestations of these themes. They are concerned with change and the instability brought on by displacement, and inevitably, a profound loss of hope.

I am not sure what I will leave behind. It is for everyone else to gather the pieces of those who leave and make sense of it.
a. Amerika im Winter
   oil on panel
b. Irrwanderung # 35 | The Search
c. Irrwanderung # 22 | K9
   oil on panel
   NFS
d. Irrwanderung # 19 | Exodus
e. Irrwanderung # 23 | A Forest
f. Irrwanderung # 27 | Aftermath
g. Irrwanderung # 13 | By the Sea
h. Irrwanderung # 16 | Smoke
i. Irrwanderung # 17 | Rescue
j. Irrwanderung # 24 | Entrance
k. Irrwanderung # 10 | Stadtrand
l. Irrwanderung # 9 | Terminal
m. Irrwanderung # 36 | Cascade
   oil on panel
Kelly Griffith

I began experimenting with photography as a child using a Polaroid camera. Over the many years and countless hours in the darkroom watching images appear like magic, I have come to appreciate that no matter what type of camera you use, it is the personal lens that creates a quality image. The lens I use has been crafted throughout the years by my own life experiences, bias and perspective as a woman who has spent the majority of time in the natural world.

It seems like I have always been part of Rancho Linda Vista. I grew up in Oracle and my closest friends and their artist parents lived on the Ranch. I visited early and often. The Ranch was a safe place for me to explore and express my true nature. As an adult, I returned to the Ranch through marriage. One does not simply marry an individual from the Ranch, one must also be conscious of the fact that you are also marrying into the larger Ranch community as a whole.

I have been living on the Ranch for the past twelve years or so. My primary role is the spouse of a second-generation founding family member. I defer to the experience and wisdom of those who have been engaged with the ideal of art and community long before I held my first Polaroid camera and find my place in small acts of kindness along with a willingness to roll up my sleeves and help wherever I can. I bring my lens and leave behind my footprints and photographs and maybe a few fruit trees and possibly watercolor or two.

From the Intimate Meanderings series
Emerging “Bring to Light”
Twinning “two become one”
archival pigment print
Ann Woodin, Andy Rush’s wife, was a patient of mine and invited me to dinner at the Ranch. That marked the start of a long and rich friendship with both. I arrived at Rancho Linda Vista in 1975 with two young sons from an ended marriage and just starting a career in clinical acupuncture at the University of Arizona College of Medicine and private practice. I spent lots of time commuting to Tucson, while fathering three sons. Painting and drawing when time permitted over the next 40 years until retirement from my acupuncture practice. During that time I married Ellen, trained in aikido for 15 years, took classes at the Drawing Studio, and travelled internationally for professional development and accompanying Ellen on her anthropological lecturing events.

**Glenwood** was a delightful stop on a motorcycle trip to summer aikido camp. Amazing how time passes when watching a creek flow.

![Glenwood](watercolor on paper)

**O mote** is an imaginary landscape. The title refers to the Japanese word - usually paired with ‘Ura’ and connotes the dichotomy of front or outer; and back or interior, as in the formal front of a house and the more informal messier and intimate reality that lies within. An old Japanese adage is ‘the bigger the front, the bigger the back’.

![O mote](watercolor on paper)

**Marshall Gulch** was a great hike and a recalled conversation with Bruce McGrew about painting the light.

![Marshall Gulch](watercolor on paper)
Joy Fox

I moved to Rancho Linda Vista in 1968 with Bruce McGrew and our two small children, Shelley and Blake. We were looking for a place where we could raise our children, have space for studios and be in a rural setting. RLV offered all of that including working alongside other artists to preserve Rancho Linda Vista in order to provide its members with an environment conducive to artistic purposes and related endeavors. We began by turning the run-down guesthouses into homes and the barn into studios and a gallery. After over 50 years, we are still working on over 20 historic adobe buildings, a gallery and a number of studios and guesthouses. A village offering a sense of place, family, community and center for the arts.

The Rancho Linda Vista Gallery has been in operation for most of those years and has been an important connection with artists from the Ranch, Oracle, Tucson and worldwide. Every year at Christmas, we have a group show of Ranch artists. We also have a guesthouse and studio for artists of all disciplines. It is set aside one month of the year for an artist residency, with stipend, studio and show of their work.

We have become an extended family with those of the second and third generations returning to either live or visit. In 2005, our daughter Shelley and Andy Rush’s daughter Maggie formed the RLV Oracle Art Nonprofit foundation dedicated to supporting cultural projects in our community. They have had many Summer Youth Workshops for local children in the renovated Wilson Barn adjacent to RLV. It serves as studios, gallery, and classrooms for workshops and events. Our community has grown to include our children, those that have lived here in the past and friends visiting through the years.

Circling the Sphere
ceramic and metal

Title Story
ceramic

Journeyer
ceramic and metal

courtesy of Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ
Charles Littler

Charles Littler is considered by most members as the founding father of Rancho Linda Vista, even though the community has never been a single mind on any subject including this one. In his mind, Rancho Linda Vista is first, a place. It is an ex-dude ranch on 80 acres of beautiful foothills near Oracle, Arizona. The actual nucleus of our community formed in 1968 as the ETA Trust. A group of ten couples or families who came together to sign the mortgage on Rancho Linda Vista. This mortgage signing, to Charles, was amazingly like a hospital booth (antisepctic but efficient, presided over by trained professionals – in this case lawyers, accountants, agents, secretaries, etc.). The community’s subsequent growth even developed much like a body – losing and adding elements while maintaining a remarkable continuity of shape and style over the years as it evolved.

If they were a bit immature as a community, it may be partly because of the rough time they had in their early years. When they first began moving into the old ranch buildings, all the systems broke down – water, sewage, electricity, gas, etc. They all had to spend the first several years living very primitively while they redid everything (sometimes two or three times before finally getting it right). In their spare time, they remodeled the barns and outbuildings into art studios, and once they saw communal eating would not work on an everyday basis, they started putting kitchens into various houses. While all this elemental but largely invisible work was being done, many of the marriages and even friendships came apart. Alas, by their fifth year together, none of them had much to show as improvements in their lives.

The community did persevere, however. By 1975, they began a new phase of expansion and development. Those marriages that did survive began to strengthen, new relationships to thrive and everyone to prosper. In addition to sponsoring hundreds of arts events, Rancho Linda Vista has also taught themselves how to cooperate and have created various ways of achieving group consensus. Most importantly, they have all come to honor and support each other’s personal aims. These are major accomplishments for any group in the 20th century.


The Motorcyclist
acrylic on canvas
on loan from the Littler-Baird Collection

Self Portrait
charcoal and tape on paper
on loan from the Littler-Baird Collection
Selina Littler

There was a period in time when I worked mainly with natural materials, building sculpture from mud, rocks, sticks, hog casing, cotton, leaves, dead bugs and a desiccated bat, maybe a skeleton of an owl. I made imagery that was biographical. Although abstract, it related directly to my life. The spiral stick swirl is symbolic of obsession, fragility, and being bound to a cycle; the double arched piece is about letting go of control, allowing trust to seep in, and giving it up to the world to take care of.

There were many of us who grew up on the ranch. I was nine when we moved out of the city and into the desert. We played in cactus, were chased by bulls and javelina, thrown off horses, bottle-fed baby goats and sheep. We were unaware of the rattlesnakes in the bushes, breathed packrat dust, stepped on rusty nails, climbed on and fell off of boulders head first, climbed into bed only to get stung by a scorpion, swam in green scum ponds with broken glass and dead animals at the bottom, stepped on Colorado river toads (by accident), were chased by adults after spying on them through windows, walked into barbed wire fences in the pitch black of night, had our heads bashed into snow forts we’d made ourselves to hide behind after throwing stone-laced snow balls at cars that drove by, swung from windmills fifty feet high, watched filmmakers make their pseudo-porn scenes in the washes, took in stray dogs. Those dogs are long gone, some people too. I left in my early twenties and came back in my early thirties to raise our son, Nicolas. There may not have been as many kids when he lived here but I think he’d agree there would have been no better place to grow up, close to nature, with its volatile beauty all around. Who could not be strongly influenced by Rancho Linda Vista, manifested in the many paintings, drawings, poetry, writings, plays, choreography, photography, sculpture, and lives of those who have been here, spent time here, or just passed through this place?

Stick Swirl
manzanita branches with hog casing

Double Arch
manzanita branches with hog casing
Bruce McGrew

Bruce McGrew was a Professor Emeritus of Art at the University of Arizona, where he taught from 1966 until his death in 1999. His home base was the art community he helped found, Rancho Linda Vista in Oracle, Arizona. From there, he traveled the world giving lectures, workshops and painting. His watercolors especially express the light and space of the landscape in which he painted. He characterized one of his guiding intentions as “space that retreats, light that advances, and a third mysterious thing that happens between them.”

Blue Beyond
oil on canvas

Day Before Easter 1988, Muleshoe Ranch
watercolor on paper

courtesy of Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ
Danielle Neibling

The work you see is part of an ongoing project. It is simultaneously about the pat dialogue of formalism and another dialogue that takes on strategic thinking of gaming, personal relationships and war.

Pairings of forms (a dark and a light) arranged within a grid were initially based on jigsaw puzzle pieces. The grid was both simple and tantalizingly complex to balance.

In June 2019, I turned to sculpting versions of the forms I had been painting and drawing with the intention of defining a set of shapes to refer to in a future body of oils. As of yet, I have still not met my own goals for the number and variety of forms.

I am the daughter of Judith Stewart. My children, Maxim and Annabelle, and I live in the nearby Wilson Homestead House, which is a designated part of Rancho Linda Vista history.

A Compendium of Forms

Seminal

oil on canvas
Arnold Nelson

I am a medical doctor and an artist. Along with my late wife Marilyn and my family, have lived at the Ranch for almost 50 years. During this time, we have built a collection of art by Rancho Linda Vista artists and friends that now numbers over 600 works. The first piece we acquired was in 1970, a painting by resident artist Bruce McGrew, received in trade for a washing machine.

My family has always kept their collection open to the Rancho Linda Vista community and its many visitors. This allows us to enjoy and share a collection that illuminates our extraordinary history, its relationships, and its presence in the larger community. The collection itself is a work in progress that reinforces these connections and stories and renders them visible.

A personal art collection, whether large or small, is in fact an ongoing process of creative discovery and expression that can profoundly enrich one's life and relationships. Each piece has a story connected to it that keeps my many art friends close to me over the years.

Untitled 1
Untitled 2
ink on paper
In the early 60s, Charles Littler, a few others and I met frequently with Hazel Larsen Archer, a former faculty member of Black Mountain College, a well-known early endeavor in community learning in North Carolina. Those conversations eventually led to the founding of Rancho Linda Vista in 1968, largely inspired by Charles.

In 1969, I resigned from my tenured teaching position at the University of Arizona, sold my Tucson property and moved with my family to RLV, literally committing my future to creating a viable community of the arts. In the first 20 years, many students came to the Ranch to study with me. At the same time, my second wife Ann Woodin and I travelled often to study community-based life skills with courses at the Esalen Institute, Green Gulch Zen center, Tassajara, as well as programs like Werner Erhard’s seminars in social dynamics and communication, often sharing our discoveries with our friends at RLV and introducing helpful teachers to the Ranch.

Clearly, I can say that our community based and rigorous art practices grounded RLV in a seriousness that has always encouraged me to my best efforts. Because many artists are looking for that in themselves, word of our community has spread for years now, inspiring people from many creative disciplines to visit. So that we at the ranch are blessed by a wide range of visiting artists, poets and musicians who often become life-long friends.

This is an example of a recent new direction in my desert studies, using the grasses, plants and seeds of the desert where I live, as monoprint material printed with acrylic colors on my etching press in many layers-- to create a meditative image that evokes the seasonal micro-nature of the Sonoran landscape of these northern Catalina Mountain slopes.

Andrew will be exhibiting pieces from his Desert Studies series in the Entry Gallery, December 27 – February 2.

**Sonoran Grasses**

*acrylic monoprint*

These Intaglio etchings were an experiment from my European travels in which I reconstructed a plate first used as an Italian cityscape by abstractly superimposing a self-portrait etching over the skeleton of the original image.

**Autoritratto A/P**

**Autoritratto 3/15**

*intaglio print*
Emily Stern Düwel

I first encountered Rancho Linda Vista as a ghost ranch. I was barely eight years old and my parents, along with several other artist families, had just purchased the property. It was a gray day and the adobe buildings stood empty and in disrepair. It was a child’s dream come to life. It was also a dream deferred. My family would stay summers on the Ranch but by the fall, we were headed back East, where my father as a composer had better job prospects. Still, summers on the Ranch were glorious: we ran everywhere and anywhere, got up to every kind of mischief, set up secret forts, had close encounters with cactus, and found ourselves lost once or twice.

After a 15-year hiatus, a wedding in Tucson offered the chance to reconnect. Starting in the early 1990s, my husband and I would come out each year and stay a few weeks or a month, in either the guesthouse or Ann and Andy’s Bath House. In that time, memories of the past began to give way to new associations, brought about by solo desert hikes, time spent drawing, writing and visiting with others.

Still, sometimes past and present folded into each other. Soon after, we moved permanently to the Ranch, two childhood tokens reappeared. The first was an old piece of plywood, on which years ago I had scribbled in tiny characters, “Private Property. Keep Out!” with requisite skull and cross bones. The other was a crimson-colored butterfly Yo-Yo that disappeared in my 11th year and showed up some 30 years later, in the wash.

My husband and I moved to Arizona from NYC with no job prospects lined up. We did however have a house! It took nevertheless a decade to grow used to the idea of the Ranch as my adult home. In my painting, I spent a couple of years re-encountering the past, working and extrapolating from miniscule video stills and ancient impressions. In time, the encounter with the desert began to feed into my work in a way that drew on and shifted my approach to image making. At first, living here I felt a distinct loss of privacy. Although, in all fairness, as a community we mostly respect each other’s boundaries. It took a while to understand that we each live very individual lives and hold fast to different perspectives and ways of operating or being in the world. While resolving disputes as a community can be a bit of a tussle (and requires a bit of skin thickening to boot), that individuality is, I believe, key to how and why we continue to survive. That and a certain openness to change.

What has Rancho Linda Vista ultimately meant to me? In NYC, we inhabited a delicately wrought bubble: friends were largely our own age, with shared interests, references, and values. I created social history exhibits for people with whom I had little contact, studied civil wars in distant lands. Moving to Arizona has put me smack dab into community, both on the Ranch and beyond. It has forced me to engage more directly and brought on new kinds of awareness, as an eye that must take in a more close-up field of vision. To enter the wilderness that lies just beyond the Ranch, to traverse the ridges and arroyos that abut the Catalinas, is to chance encounters with the unexpected and in that moment to surrender one’s most fast-held parameters.
a. Channel  
   acrylic on paper

b. Vectors

c. Desert Dog

d. Skip Tracery

e. Xochi Mariposa

f. Yellow Pod  
   acrylic on panel
Jean Stern

My work is concerned with color, form, and the persona in nature. The paintings included in this exhibit were inspired by several trips to Rocky Point made during stays at Rancho Linda Vista, as well as earlier memories of Cayuga Lake in upstate New York. In their interactions with the sea and surroundings, the figures become interchangeable with the natural world.

a. Beach Stones/ Face 2 – Rocky Point
   oil on canvas

b. Tidal Wave / Storm
   oil on canvas

c. Red Blanket on the Seashore
   oil on canvas

d. Beach Stones/ Face 1 – Tear along the Road
   oil on canvas

courtesy of Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ
Chuck Sternberg

Chuck’s House
model
Judith Stewart

My sculptures are half about materials, and half about form. Clay has a beauty of its own. It holds texture, edge, and rich natural surfaces that can be wonderfully surprising. In hand, a slab of clay is flexible and yielding, naturally tending toward organic contours. Joining one section of clay to another, a human form begins. It is an intuitive way to work, very open to what the clay suggests. At the same time, my empathy for the beauty of the human form, and what it suggests, makes the final decisions.

The demand put upon materials to hold form, and the hope that a human presence will emerge, is for me the fascinating part of making figurative sculpture.

“Finding” Rancho Linda Vista, at a time in my life when I was “searching”, was like having good fortune all in one place, at one time. I came to RLV as a guest artist in 1991 and in two weeks knew I wanted to stay. Andy Rush responded to my question “how does one get to stay here?” by saying, “everything happens through people”. I went from being one individual to being one among many. I learned that everyone has an opinion, and that it was not only OK to be wrong, it was a relief not to have to always be right.

RLV has given me a place in the large home that is Rancho Linda Vista, a small house with a mountain to contemplate from my kitchen window, a studio for art, other artists and good people for companions, gallery openings and music in the barnyard, and Ranch meetings where everyone speaks their mind. I live in nature, with ancient granite boulders, parades of wildlife, battles with prickly pear, earth to dig in, a nurturing of manzanitas, buckwheat’s, native grasses, and any small plant that volunteers. Our rules are pay your rent and take care of your house. We do not need a rule that says — Love This Special Place.

One unforgettable experience of this place was being up on the parapet roof of El Deseo, where one can see the far landscapes in all directions. I saw the evening sky with two perfect spheres, the sun going down in a blaze behind the mountains to the west, and the moon rising into the deep blue sky in the east, in perfect balance. It felt like my arms were reaching out, conducting a symphony of nature.

a. Unknown Figure  
bronze edition # 1/5

b. Sister  
ceramic

c. The Stepper  
bronze edition # 3/5

courtesy of Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ