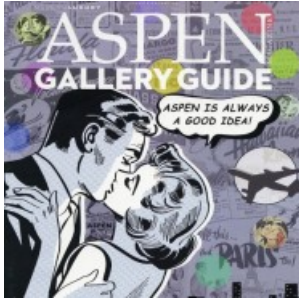


COMMERCE

Young affluence and prolific artist generate art boom in Aspen

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Aspen Gallery Guide Nelson De La Nuez

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

The city of Aspen, CO is undergoing something of an art renaissance, led by "The King of Pop Art" Nelson De La Nuez.

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The artist's work sell for a minimum of \$30,000 with mixed media works often fetching anywhere from \$65,000 to a staggering \$105,000. With Aspen now among the most desirable resort towns in the United States and a corresponding increase in real estate, other affluent habits and interests are also catching on.

"Aspen is huge now," said Stacy Bell, creative director of **Pop Land Studios**, Mr. De La Nuez's studio. "Starting Dec. 25, all of the celebrities and wealthy vacationers with second homes flock there and love the art scene.

"His art sells well in every market we sell in, but the very best ones are the high end, well educated, well traveled, which include Silicon Valley as well as the Hamptons," she said. "He has many clients in both places and has clients who fly out on their private jets from any location for his gallery shows or special events."

Heating up in Aspen

Gallery 1949, a local art exhibition venue, has acquired a number of Mr. De La Nuez's original paintings, which will show to the public. Often his originals are sold to private collectors, making this perhaps the only chance to see some of the works before they are snatched up.



"Chanel N 5 Purple with Newsprint," by Nelson De La Nuez

His style combines the pop art, whose most famous practitioners include Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, with the Surrealism pioneered by artists including Salvador Dali. The blend results in a satirical yet accessible selection of works that often take pop culture as their subjects, including widely known luxury items such as iconic perfumes and handbags.

As per the release, Mr. De La Nuez stands out from many successful studio artists, who often relinquish painting duties to studio assistants after achieving high enough renown. Mr. De La Nuez's unwillingness to conform to the norm has led to a high demand that the artist struggles to satiate.

Mr. De La Nuez has had success for quite some time. He sold several works of art to pop megastar Michael Jackson just before his death; his luggage and fashion items, sold out department stores including Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom and Bloomingdale's; his fans and collectors include "Star Wars" creator George Lucas and movie stars such as Tom Hanks, Julie Andrews and Clint Eastwood.



"Classic Birkin" resin on wood, by Nelson De La Nuez

Still, the transformation of Aspen into a hub for young retirees, remote workers and second homes, is thanks in large part to the tech boom's creation of young wealth in nearby Silicon Valley, CA and Seattle.

With the increase in affluence in Aspen, it follows that hobbies, including art collecting, will also enter the city. Indeed, Modern Luxury's Aspen Magazine also publishes a supplemental "gallery guide" for the city's art collectors. One of Mr. De La Nuez's works made the cover of the 2015/winter 2016 issue.



Gallery 1949, showing Nelson De La Nuez's work

Art and luxury

An influx of young wealth thanks to the booming tech industry has shaken up real estate in recent years.

As the global economy continues to grow, more cities are experiencing booms in luxury real estate, according to a new report by Coldwell Banker NRT.

In the United States metropolitan areas like Seattle, Atlanta, Houston and Dallas, TX are emerging as affluent hubs, but so are resort towns like Colorado's Vail and Aspen. In addition to international economic expansion, the rise of new markets can be partially attributed to young affluents that have a greater degree of freedom in choosing where to live ([see story](#)).

Luxury brands often try to cultivate a link between the meticulous craftsmanship of their products and art, meaning that art is never far from the products the affluent gravitate toward.

From fashion boutique gallery displays to ridesharing yacht applications, Art Basel Miami Beach has become a sanctuary for luxury brands looking to make an impression on discerning affluents and art enthusiasts.

Held on the weekend of Dec. 3-6, Art Basel Miami Beach, a contemporary and modern art fair, gathers artwork from 267 galleries based in North America, Latin America, Asia, Europe and Africa. Alongside gallery exhibitions, performances and film screenings, luxury brands stage events and exclusives to further their interactions with Art Basel's wealthy crowds, who have a penchant for artwork and experiential happenings ([see story](#)).

Mr. De La Nuez's work is both accessible and varied, helping to sustain its popularity.

"People can relate to the themes, it's pop culture," Ms. Bell said. "He doesn't just have one thing he paints; he loves all pop Americana and the idea of juxtaposing luxury lifestyle themes with vintage memories."