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George M. Ottinger . . . from page 1

While on furlough in Panama, Ottinger learned about the California gold rush and hopped a San Francisco-bound ship. Once there, he made his way to the gold fields and came to understand the meaning of "bust." He and a buddy returned to San Francisco where the pair booked passage on a ship bound for China. Sound exciting? It wasn't. Somewhere in the Pacific there was a mutiny aboard ship, so when the vessel arrived in Hawaii, Ottinger decided he had tasted enough adventure and announced he was returning "home" to the east coast. There, he pursued a career in art, something in which he had dabbled when he was much younger. More jobs and disappointments followed Ottinger as he absorbed as much training as possible from various artists, including an abbreviated enrollment at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

During this time, Ottinger's mother had joined the Mormon Church. Sister Ottinger persuaded her son to join the Church as well, and in 1861 the two traveled by covered wagon to Salt Lake City. During the arduous, historic trek, Ottinger chronicled the event with paint, brush, and palette (and was one of the few to do so). I find it interesting that even though the science of Daguerreotypes and photographs had been around for a few years, there is no record of photography ever being used in those first fifteen years or so of the Mormon exodus. It's unfortunate that a couple of Elders didn't knock on the doors of Mathew Brady or Timothy O'Sullivan in those early years.

I was able to see a number of these paintings after a chance meeting with a nice lady who revealed that she had some Ottinger art and asked if I knew anything about him. All of her paintings were from Ottinger's 1861 pilgrimage to Utah. Four paintings hanging in a back bedroom depict various, now-famous stops on the Mormon Trail. You Mormon historians or geographers will need to let me know in which order these delightful pieces were painted: Platte River, Courthouse Rock, Scott's Bluff, and Devil's Gate (adjacent to Martin's Cove, Wyoming). I'm sure the Church would love to have these four works keep company with Ottinger's "Chimney Rock," usually on display at the Museum of Church History and Art. Journals can't quite provide the same description of conditions along the trail or these famous landmarks as do the Ottinger paintings. Notice how orderly the campsite is in "Platte River 1861". | 0 | Wagons nestled closely together, livestock grazing as a herd, women taking advantage of the nearby river for a little laundry activity, and the men folk gathered together, perhaps discussing tomorrow's twenty miles. The next shows the pioneers on the move with an illuminated landmark, "Courthouse Rock 1861" | 1 | in the background. "Scott's Bluff," | 2 | another familiar site used by the pioneers for a navigation point stands out as another celebratory landmark. It's a well-composed and balanced work that contains a rare first-hand glimpse of pioneer life on the trail. Like these other three, "Devil's Gate" is a similarly-composed chronicle of the pioneer march at this famous stopping point -- highly publicized in recent years because of the sesquicentennial recognition of the Willey-Martin Company tragedy.

Upon arrival in Salt Lake, during a time when his mom was probably nagging him to attend Sacrament Meeting, it was Ottinger's intention to continue to California, but two chaps convinced him it would be a good idea to hang around for a time and paint scenery for the new Salt Lake Theatre. | 3 | Ottinger

Exhibition Preview: Salt Lake City Backsides to the Transtar 5000 Whole Animal Cooker

Atomic Testing Exposed at The Pickle Company

by Frank McEntire

This weekend, a group of friends, including honorees Charles Bowden and Rosalie Sorrels, sat in Ken Sander's living room to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Ken Sanders Rare Books. The night concluded a manic month-long series of events in his store, including visiting authors, performers, and artists.

Not planned was the first snow of the season that herded the thin-skinned indoors, instead of joining the weatherwise who huddled in the back yard, backsides around Ken's Transtar 5000 Whole Animal Cooker. All, however, enjoyed Ken's hospitality and his generous spread of grilled ribs, chicken, lamb, brisket, and his famous pork butt. The few vegetarians and Ramadan-celebrating Muslims who couldn't eat meat until 7:30 p.m. brought appropriate cuisine and beverages for themselves.

Featured on Ken's living room walls was a large assortment of rare rock-and-roll concert posters, and the room's flat surfaces accommodated piles of recently-acquired vinyl record albums. I arrived at Ken's straight from installing two of my pieces ("The Circus Is in Town" and "The Cold War Jesus") at [The Pickle Company's](#) Exposed exhibit. A dozen artists are showing large-scale mixed-media works that explore the legacy of the atomic bomb. When I put several exhibit invitations on the coffee table, people started talking about nuclear issues.

U.S. aboveground atomic testing in the Nevada desert from 1951 to 1963, when John F. Kennedy signed the partial nuclear test ban treaty, blew up 128 bombs and spread a downwinder effect on Utahans and others across the country. This does not take into account the 828 underground tests that ended in 1992, of which about 50 percent leaked, with some plumes soaring 16,000 feet into the air. Utahans and others received radiation decades after the atmospheric tests stopped.

One of Ken's guests told us about her grandparents who suffer from tumors on the frontsides of their bodies (but not on their backsides) that doctors must frequently excise.

She said that in the 1950s, when the signals for the atomic bomb tests sounded, many in the community, including her grandparents, would watch the great mushroom cloud explosions, knowing there was no danger, because they were told so by government agents. "Now, they suffer terribly from radiation exposure," she said.

After Atomic Energy Commission documents of the 1950s were declassified in 1979, however, we learned that the radiation fallout clouds produced by many of those bombs were comparable to Chernobyl, according to The New York Times environmental reporter, Keith Schneider..

As Carole Gallagher relates in her award-winning book, *American Ground Zero*, in 1995, retired mortician Elmer Pickett of St. George said, "They done to us what the Russians couldn't do." This is not a line out of a Tom Clancy techno-thriller: the "they" he refers to is his own government."

In May, 1995, the Salt Lake Art Center exhibited Gallagher's "American Ground Zero: The Secret Nuclear War." She included seventy-one black-and-white photographs, with accompanying text panels. And this year, as The Pickle Company's Artist-in-Residence, she shows a selection of her photographs from the series in Exposed.

These works chronicle Gallagher's passion, if not her obsession, and speaks volumes of an American political and military atrocity on its own people as human guinea

maintained his painting position there for four years, working for theatre manager, John T. Caine (my great grandfather). Ottinger married during this time but his wife died during childbirth. He provided for the child until his second marriage in 1864.

During these early years in Salt Lake, Ottinger established (and inside of a year, closed) the Deseret Academy of Fine Arts. Although a little ahead of its time, the academy acted as a model for other art schools to follow. Bent on making a full-time living as an artist, Ottinger teamed with renowned photographer Charles Savage, hand-tinting photographs. Ottinger's portrait of his three children utilized technically three mediums. Photos were taken of the subjects. The prints were then color tinted by Ottinger and lastly incorporated into his painting. This may have been a fairly common production of the time but I don't recall seeing it before. Nonetheless, the photo-painting presents a very touching image of the Ottinger children. | 4 |

Because Ottinger had experienced a lot of ocean time, and no doubt did some sketching and painting on board, he created a number of seascapes. Author and fellow Art Nurd, Bill Seifrit supplied a couple of delicate and damaged paintings, one depicting four ships | 5 | which are reminiscent of the voyage of Columbus. The other painting is of a character sitting on a chest on the beach, | 6 | after whom "Robinson Crusoe" was created, according to Seifrit. Although both of these paintings have a few pieces missing, their simplicity and power are still present.

Others from the Seifrit collection show "Mt. Nebo," | 7 | and an apparent study for some scenery. | 8 | I'll have to check with Chris Lino and Chuck Morey from Pioneer Theatre to identify which famous play this scene depicted. Also note the very Victorian (except for the bared leg and shoulders) "New Slippers." | 9 | Even more interesting is the back of the painting where Ottinger inscribed "New Slippers" and sketched the lady and the slippers.



Ottinger would spend the rest of his life in a variety of positions, all the while trying to make a living at his creative craft. He distinguished himself as an art teacher and, at times, operated studios out of his homes. Early Polk Directories list him variously "Around the Block" at 381 3rd Avenue, 222 I Street, and then later on Sherman Avenue. Not only was he an early art professor at the University of Utah, the restless Ottinger also managed to accomplish the following: Salt Lake City Fire Chief (1876-90), SLC Water Works superintendent (1883-90), and Adjutant General of

the Utah National Guard (1894-97). While residing in the Avenues, Ottinger organized the "20th Ward Institute," predecessor of the Mormon Church's MIA—"mutual" to all you kids from the 50s and 60s. Ottinger and friend, Alice Merrill Horne, the first lady of the visual arts in Utah, organized what became the Alice Art Collection under the auspices of the Utah Art Institute (present day Utah Arts Council). Ottinger Hall, up City Creek Canyon and across the street from Ranch Kimball's residence, was named for him. The hall served as a fellowship meeting place for the veteran volunteer fire fighters of the area. The Salt Lake Rotary Club has in recent years taken on the project of restoring and maintaining this historic hall.

In Ottinger's unpublished autobiography, he laments in 1872 his existence as a painter saying, "in the last eight years I have painted 223 pictures which have been sold for \$3,415, or a little over \$15 each. Now deducting \$7.00 each for supplies, canvas, paint and framing, it leaves me \$1,752, or a little over half. My work is worth only \$219 a year. When I look at my family and our wants, I grieve..." Although a well-respected artist and volunteer, Ottinger never felt content in his projects. A man of multiple endeavors but feeling that he had mastered none to his satisfaction, Ottinger passed away in Salt Lake in 1917 at age 84.

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pigs unawares —the moral, biological and environmental fallout of what she calls a 'secret nuclear war.'

As I wrote in a Salt Lake Tribune article* at the time, Gallagher's "investigation, which she conducted with the tenacity of Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, deals mostly with the victims of nuclear testing, not military strategy or national-security issues. Hers is a human approach, yet it is not fashionable or comfortable."

The downwinders, atomic veterans, and test site workers whose lives are vividly portrayed in American Ground Zero could have included the relatives of Ken's living room guest.

As Gallager wrote in her book, "They don't have identification numbers tattooed on their wrists, but they do carry scars on their bodies from multiple life-prolonging operations and radiation-caused deformities and birth defects."

It was a grim reminder of dangerous times to sit in Ken's festive living room near the end of 2007 and listen to a story about tumors and bad health that plague "downwinders" so many years after nuclear testing.

It's been forty-five years since the last plume of radiated light spewed its contaminated dust into the planet's wind currents. The health hazards and environmental effects of nuclear testing have lingered for almost a half-century, and they will extend far into the future. Upcoming generations of artists will continue to show through their work what Gallagher says is the "grotesque that has something to do with our moral center as a society, as a culture."

Exposed, is a harbinger of such contemporary aesthetic bombshells from artists living on downwinder soil: literally all artists everywhere, and every living thing on the planet, survive the radioactive particulate from atomic testing by America and the former Soviet Union that spun the Carnival roulette wheel of The Cold War.

This exhibit is being shown in coordination with Plan-B Theatre's world premiere of Mary Dickson's new gripping play, Exposed, from which the exhibit derives its name. The Rose Wagner Studio Theatre, HEAL Utah, the Salt Lake Film Center, the Temporary Museum of Permanent Change, and the Utah Bioneers have also planned activities to explore the legacy and impact of nuclear testing. These events, linked with Gallagher's American Ground Zero of a dozen years ago, are tangible markers of a national tragedy with consequences far beyond Utah's borders and the Twentieth Century from which it initially radiated.

Exposed will be at [The Pickle Company](#) October 12 to November 17 and will feature new work by [Trent Thursby Alvey](#), Jan Andrews, [Jean Arnold](#), Frederick Brayman, [Jim Frazer](#), Suzanne Kanatsiz, [Frank McEntire](#), Michael McGlothlen, Shawn Porter, Eric Ristau, Suzanne Simpson, and Maryann Webster as well as the images of Carole Gallagher.

*"Gallagher's Chilling Look At 'Secret Nuclear War'", The Salt Lake Tribune, May 14, 1995, Frank McEntire.

