

# New Exhibit Links Art and Technology at Saint Mary's College

By Ryan McKinley



"Cloverdale" by Ron Hutt "Delphi" by Ron Hutt "Bandelier National Monument" by Ron Hutt "Los Alamos" by Ron Hutt Images courtesy Saint Mary's College Museum of Art

The Saint Mary's College Museum of Art's current multimedia artwork exhibition, "The Axis Mundi/Open Portals," by Ron Hutt is a true combination of art and technology – and is unlike anything the museum has featured before.

On display in the Armistead Gallery, the exhibit showcases Hutt's digital paintings, as well as digital photographs that combine with Quick Response Codes (QR Codes) to provide sound clips. The codes are interactive and patrons will need to bring their smart phones in order to scan them. If viewers choose not to utilize the QR technology they will be missing part of the experience.

The title of the show, Axis Mundi, relates to a philosophical belief that finds a geographical midpoint between the earth and the sky, where all compass directions converge. It is also seen as the natural human instinct to create identity. The exhibit features a dozen photographs taken by Hutt as he traveled across the United States and Europe. The locations range from as far as Amsterdam and Greece, to as close as Cloverdale, California. Each photo utilizes vertical and panoramic

space, but all are obscured by a large QR barcode that holds the links to the sound clips. Interestingly, in order to scan the codes the viewer must get close up to the photos, which then makes the once obscured image come into focus.

Four sound files accompany every photo. They can be played in any order and as many times as the viewer would like. The files range in length from a second to five minutes, and feature everything from ambient noise (horses, traffic, children laughing) to music, and even a news segment documenting the reopening of the New York Stock Exchange after Hurricane Sandy. The sound of the wind plays throughout the space from overhead speakers.

If that were not enough, the photos and sound clips inspired Hutt to create digital works, which appear to be a mix of science fiction imagery and Japanese landscape paintings. To continue the theme of Axis Mundi, all the paintings are long columns that examine vertical space as well as a depth of field. There are a number of similarities between the digital images: they all feature a sphere seemingly representing a sun

or moon, a series of geometric shapes flowing from top to bottom, a landscape, and all are devoid of people. The paintings make the statement that through technology society is more connected and at the same time equally isolated. They also point out that the current world is a new landscape or an open portal to a future society.

All the paintings are projected on the far wall of the gallery, and are also available as a free download, via QR code, for the viewer to keep and share. The exhibit is truly something to experience and is a sign of where art is heading in the future.

"The Axis Mundi/Open Portals" is currently on display through Dec. 6. Also on display are oil paintings by William Keith, artwork by Luis Gutierrez, and "The Dr. Maurice Alberti Print Collection of European and American Masters."

The Saint Mary's College Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga.

For more information, visit <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/saint-marys-college-museum-of-art>.

## Must-Know Basics for Serious Foodies

Author Lopez-Alt discusses 'The Food Lab' at LLLC

By Lou Fancher

Culinary secrets unfold into science lessons in the pages of author J. Kenji Lopez-Alt's 960-page doorstop of a cookbook, "The Food Lab: Better Home Cooking Through Science" (W. W. Norton & Company, 2015). The Serious Eats managing culinary director balances must-know basics including tips for the perfect boiled egg and properly toasted bagels with a bicep-building pancake technique (baking soda is vital), 20 pages of Thanksgiving-related instructions, over 1,000 full-color images, 39 pasta recipes, eight pages on making chicken stock (unflavored gelatin is key) and easy-to-read explanations of radiant heat transfer, the anatomy of a knife, the chemical makeup of meat and why a burger's "smash time" matters – and more.

For kitchen fanatics, the best-selling book by the author of the James Beard Award-nominated column "The Food Lab," is exhaustive. But even those less inclined to ooh and ah over conversations about meat moisture or engage in fresh versus dry oregano debates can experience the thrill of discovering there is a scientific reason Granny's roast beef was five star-worthy or Uncle Joe's meatloaf had that extra zing.

Lamorinda's love for all things food was evident Oct. 22, as approximately 100 people attended a Commonwealth Club appearance at the

Lafayette Library by Lopez-Alt. Moderator Joanna Pearlstein, deputy managing editor for Wired, said Lopez-Alt was a like a superhero for "geeks" who like to cook. Seeking wisdom, she first asked about the most common mistakes made by cooks.

Lopez-Alt said the one rule that should never be violated is to "respect the person with the knife in their hand," setting a casual, fun tone for the evening. Sounding more like two friends chatting over brisket and beer than like highly respected writers and experienced cooks (Pearlstein shared that she's been perfecting a chocolate chip cookie recipe for years and has no intention of stopping), the conversation moved swiftly to searing, salt, brining and more.

The words from the master? Searing meat incorrectly will not bring out the juices: don't try to bring the meat to room temperature and start out with a dryer steak for faster searing and a moister steak in the end. "Salt is one of the most important ingredients in dishes," Lopez-Alt said. "It enhances the way you perceive other flavors." Chemical properties in salt draw moisture out of meat by osmosis so timing is crucial for forming a brine on the surface. With poultry, salt allowed to relax the muscle fibers by seasoning the bird and letting it sit, then evaporate and cook when dry,

again results in the most desirable texture.

Lopez-Alt uses three kinds of salt in cooking: Kosher salt that is coarse enough to pick up with his fingers for 99 percent of the food he prepares; large-flake finishing salt for adding crunchiness; and popcorn salt. He said for regular table salt, Morton is OK.

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