

Heliotrope brings outside in with artistic ingenuity

by Rick Nielsen

Heliotrope—just the sound of it conjures up images of monsters or science fiction oddities. In reality it is UNLV's newly commissioned environmental art form, located in the Richard Tam Alumni Center (RTAC).

About a year ago, 158 artists from the Southwest region of the U.S. were sent open invitations to compete for the honor of creating a unique and special piece of art especially for the RTAC. Three finalists were selected by jury and allowed the chance to present a model of their work, which was to be based on the criteria of education, alumni, and university life.

Patrick Zentz, a Montana sculptor and rancher, was selected to create the art form of his choice. The astonishing result is the Heliotrope.

"The Heliotrope is centered on the idea of capturing the major components of a given environment and putting them in artistic form," Zentz said. According to him, the Heliotrope "is a site-specific art form which was designed and exists solely for the space it occupies." From the time it was commissioned to the time it was erected in the RTAC, nearly five months transpired.

The Heliotrope is a massive structure weighing almost 8,000 pounds. It consists of three mahogany and aluminum rings that automatically rotate and adjust their position according to the sun. The sun is projected onto the floor which now has the horizon line of Las Vegas etched into it.

The movement of the wind is translated into light patterns on a

light ring incorporated into the base of the structure. The light ring is electrically connected to a wind vane that revolves on the roof. If the wind direction changes, the change is reflected in the same way by the light ring.

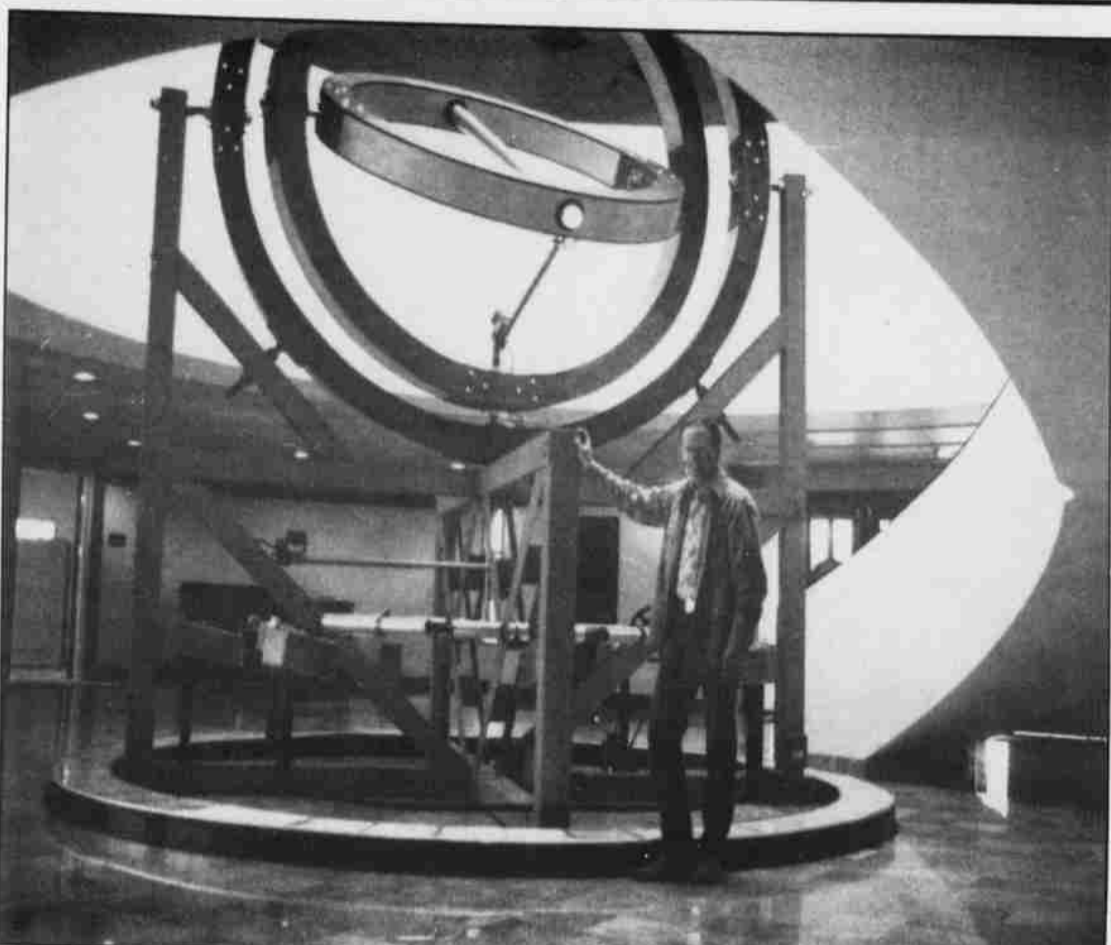
Temperature change is transformed into sound through a system of eight acoustic drum boxes that are struck by mallets. Thermostats activate the mallets and are adjusted in 10 degree increments, starting at 40 degrees up to 110 degrees. One box will sound at 40 degrees, two at 50 degrees, and so on.

Fred Albrecht, director of the UNLV alumni center, said he "feels that the modern and progressive art of the Heliotrope represents the mood of the community, the university, and the Alumni Association." He projected that is the reason it was chosen.

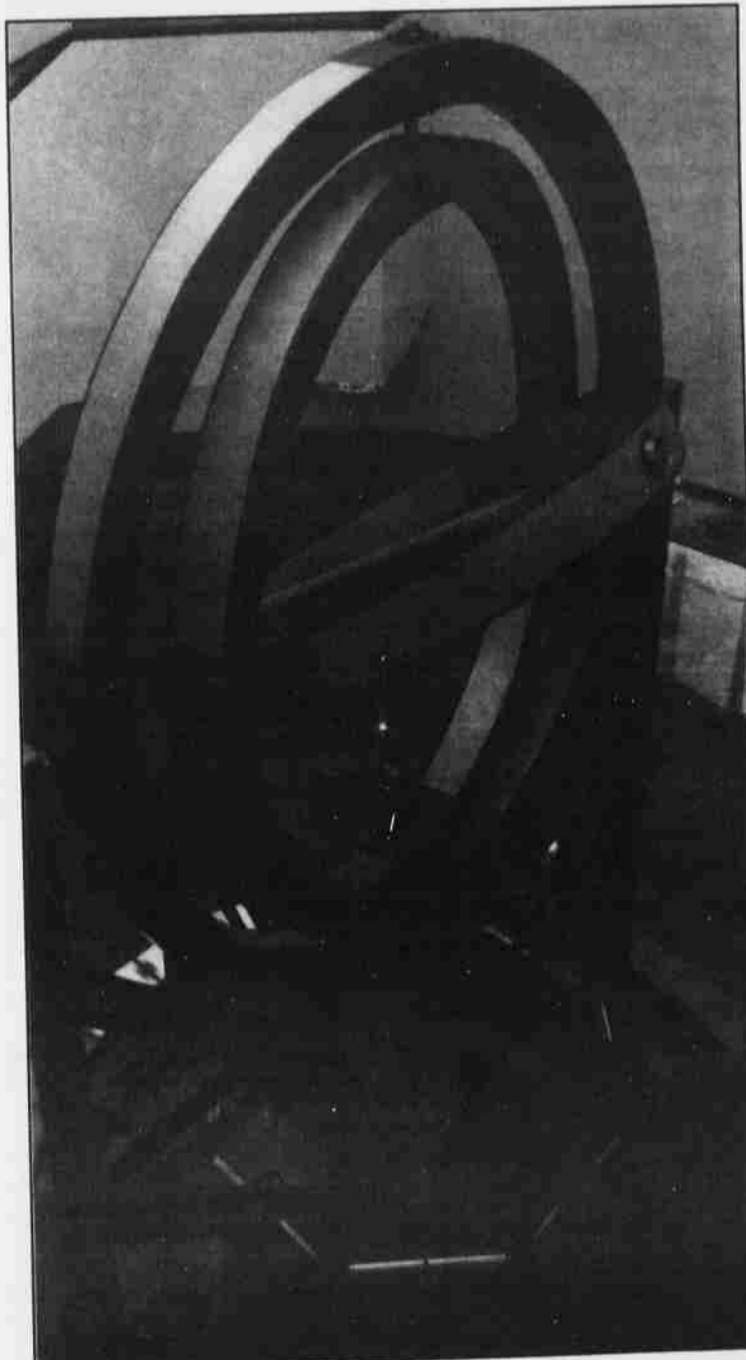
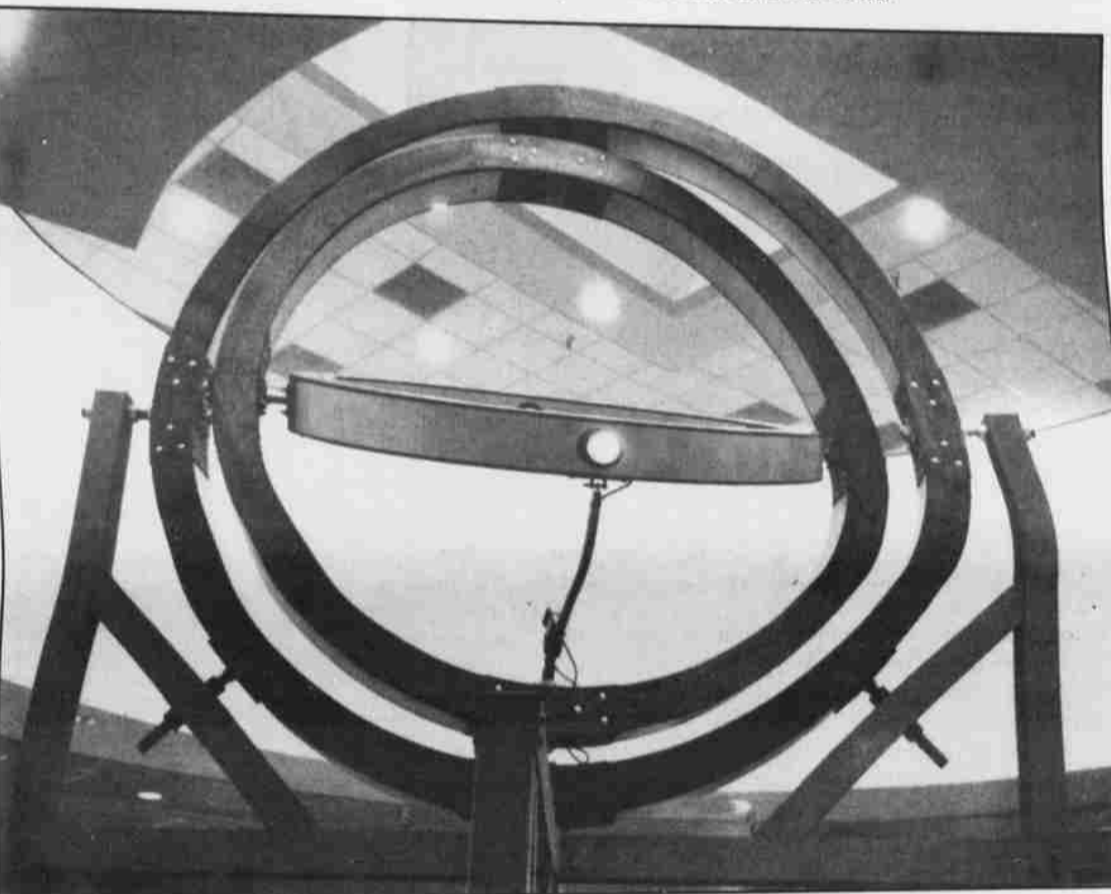
The Heliotrope was made possible by a gift to the Alumni Association from the Leo Gibrich Estate. Zentz was awarded \$35,000 for the work, although that equals only a fraction of the cost to build it. It is already appraised at over double that, and Albrecht estimates the value of the art to continue to escalate.

Whether the observer is an accomplished art aficionado, or just a casual admirer of such cultural pastimes, the Heliotrope is quite a sight to behold, and possibly the most massive and impressive piece of art on campus.

The RTAC is open from 8 to 5 daily and anyone is welcome to stop by to enjoy the Heliotrope. The sculpture is already attracting the attention and interest of visitors from other states.



Patrick Zente created the heliotrope located in the Alumni Center photo by Rick Nielsen



Art at UNLV features Heliotrope

story by El Requa
photos by Rick Nielsen

The newest gallery on campus is located on the second floor of the new Richard Tam Alumni Building. The Bryan and Jesse Metcalf Gallery houses the permanent sculpture by Patrick Zentz. The Heliotrope, its name meaning "sun responsive," is reactive to the climatic changes in our local weather. The movement of the sun causes the revolution of large mahogany rings that rotate within each other, creating shadows and light circles on the floor.

The wind determines the patterns of light on the base of the sculpture by a system incorporating a sixteen foot rotor mounted outside the building at the top of the atrium skylight. Temperature change is translated into sound by a system of eight acoustic boxes and an octagonal camshaft within the base of the Heliotrope. The temperature differences produce varied tones.

Zentz's intention with this work is to explore and present a different perspective of the components that make up the environ-

ment of Las Vegas.

The second floor is host to changing exhibits featuring a variety of local artists, group shows and work of alumni. Recently the group show "Eleven" was exhibited. The works are a variety from this women's group. The show was titled "Under the Influence,"

"The Heliotrope, its name meaning "sun responsive," is reactive to the climate changes in our local environment"

referring to the influence of female role models on the individual artists involved. The show contained a diverse collection of works from 12 female artists. The work varied from paintings, drawings, mixed media, and sculptural work.

The Donna Beam Gallery, located in the Alta Ham Fine Arts building, houses exhibitions by faculty, students, and invited artists. In addition, it also hosts exhibits sponsored by the Nevada

Institute of Contemporary Art.

Currently running is the exhibit entitled "Private Collections/Public Viewing: Figuratively Speaking." This show presents the variety of expression that can be found in the human form. The exhibit, curated by Jerry Schefcik, is a collection of works selected from the private collections of the NICA Founders.

The show features well known artists such as Francis Bacon, William de Kooning, Robert Rauschenberg, Alex Katz, Misha Gordon and David Hockney. Also included are the works of two UNLV instructors, James Pink and Jose Bellver. The media displayed are varied, ranging from painting, drawing, prints, photography, and sculpture.

This is an annual event which opened on March 20 and will run until April 14. Beginning April 22 the Donna Beam Gallery will begin to display the work of the Master of Fine Arts students. These exhibitions will be one person shows, lasting for one week each with each student presenting his graduate work.