

# A Bit of Berlin Comes to the Klondike

Story & Photos  
by Dan Davidson

Reinald Nohal has long had an infatuation with Dawson City, so much so that he acquired land here and built the Bunkhouse. Originally intended as a haven for European backpackers, it has since become one of the summer housing solutions for Dawson's seasonal work force of young people.

Nohal also designed and built the famous Subway to Nowhere, which celebrated the ideas of German artist Martin Kippenberger and was located beside the Bunkhouse from 1996 to 2009. In that year it was dismantled and shipped for display in Los Angeles.

From 2005 to the present year, Nohal and his wife, Irmelin, have provided residency space for eight artists from their native Berlin to come and create art in Dawson City during the tourist season.

Now they have selected and transported a massive collection of art, called Berlin/Klondike, from the continent to display at Dawson's Odd Gallery.

"I've always wanted to have some interchange between the big city of Berlin and the last frontier," said Reinald. "That was it. I wanted to promote and show Yukon artists in Berlin as well."

"Berlin is attractive to the international art world. On the other hand, Dawson City is just an exotic destination for every European or worldwide big city guys who have read Jack London and about the Gold Rush and so on."

"The difference in landscape and climate may also be an inspiration for their future artwork. This (exhibit) is just to give it a boost."

The Nohals want to increase the number of exchanges from Europe to Dawson.

"The biggest problem is the air fare," Reinald said. "But they can live at the Bunkhouse."

He's hoping to get at least some official support for the idea from the Yukon government and plans to have a meeting on the subject with Tourism and Culture Minister Elaine Taylor.

As for this show, it will be staged in Los Angeles in October and then on to Zurich, Munich, and Berlin and perhaps even New York and Miami. The full itinerary is still being worked out.

Irmelin pointed out that a number of the pieces in Berlin/Klondike had been done by the Nohals' artists in residence.

There's a wide range of work among the 153 pieces by 67 different artists. Some pieces are classically representational, even pastoral, while others are sketchy abstracts. Others have menacing dark urban moods, and still others are colourful fantasies. Some pieces involve wordplay and others remain untitled. One was even painted using the material used to chip

seal our Yukon highways. A pile of shredded vinyl records is called "Black Gold."

"The works are confrontational, but they correspond, or confront, each other," Reinald says. "It was quite an experience to hang them."

The exhibit was on display here from July 21 to August 3.



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