

# Longing & Belonging: Oh Las Vegas! Oh Nevada!

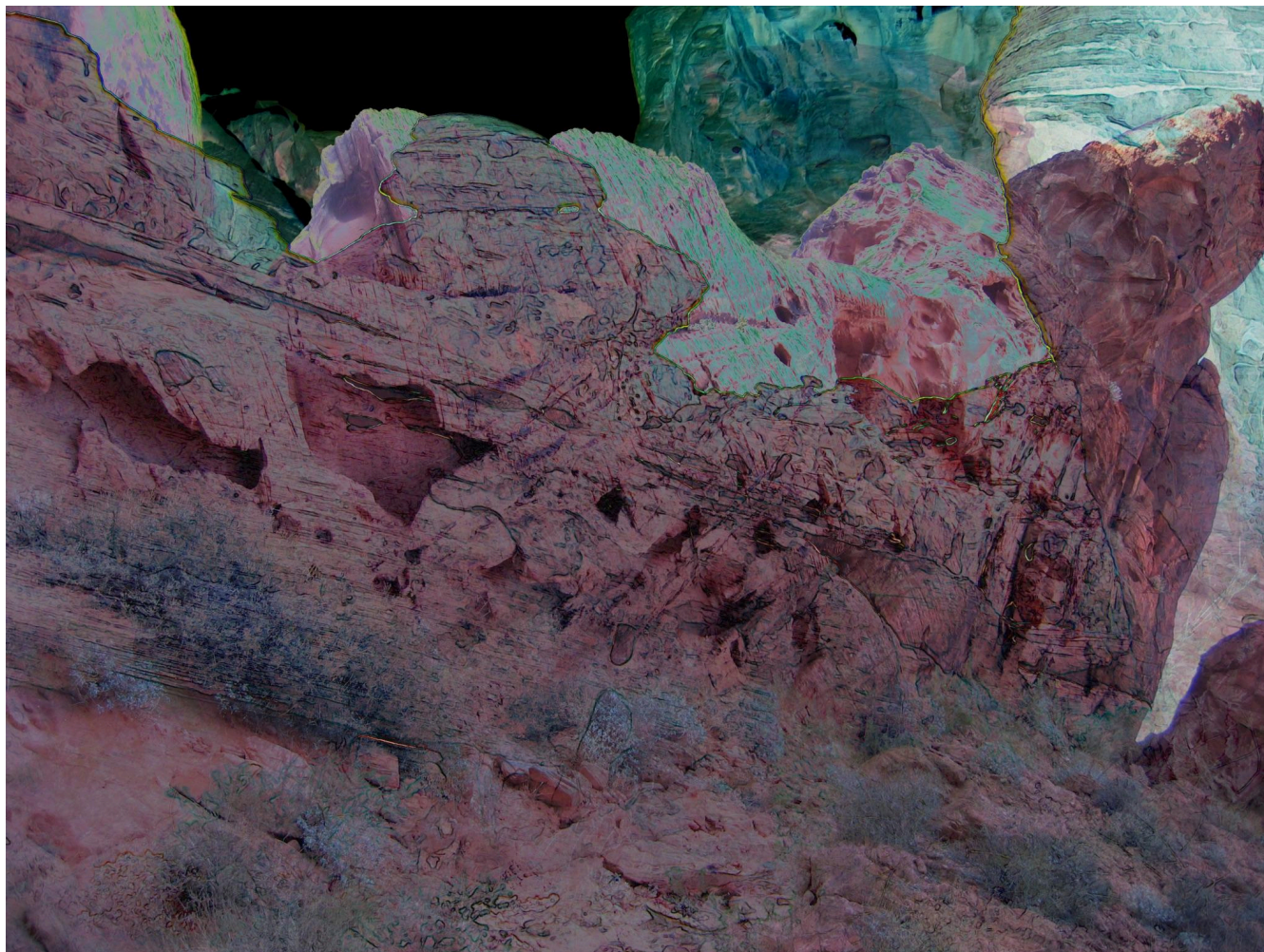
Sherry ShaRose Niedelman

To all the Dreamers who believe Las Vegas is their golden ticket  
to all the riches they desire, answer to their prayers  
that all Nevada has to offer is a single strip of pavement  
an amusement park to ride to the ends of time  
seen from the sky as they land at Harry Reid airport  
eyes widened as a child opening birthday presents  
overlooking the day-to-day normalcy that goes on here  
what lies behind the buzzing bees that serve them  
the rush of making it on time to work, to school,  
to doctor appointments, mad dashes on the freeway  
in its bottleneck choke just like anywhere USA  
how tourists displace civilian lives in news traffic reports  
when CES makes headlines above Santa Claus  
all this blinds the visitor from looking beyond  
towering hotels, clockless casinos, elaborate buffets, glitzy shows.

What if I were to tell you there is so much more  
that this land has been waiting for you to drop your jaw  
at its magnificent beauty, a hidden threshold of wonder  
I have lived as a Las Vegan for eighteen years  
that's *Chai* – to life! in more Hebrew terms  
and many Vegans are vegan who dine on normal portions  
though I have been stuck in a vortex of caregiving  
deterioration of my own body falling apart  
piece-by-piece as I glue it all back together  
my third eye remains on the prize of adventure that awaits  
stead-fast to the dream of making it to touch  
a bristlecone pine at Great Basin National Park  
far away from the light pollution of neon  
to witness the magic of dark skies in twinkle.

To all the Seekers who believe that Vegas and Nevada  
are places to skip over on their way to enlightenment  
let me tell you that there are people in town  
and across this mountainous state that disagree  
for theirs is a secret most do not know or care to share  
how we can jump in the car and suddenly be  
in the middle of wilderness just down the street  
Red Rock, Mount Charleston, Valley of Fire  
local for locals who seek solace and inspiration  
all within their reach an extension of home  
*Shhhhh! Don't tell anyone, this is just between you and me*  
And oh the artists you will find front and center  
not only on First Friday from south to north, town to frontier

Creativity is golden in the Silver State of mind  
I am not so sure you can handle the truth of the Ninth Island.



Photograph by Sherry ShaRose Niedelman