

Agriculture makes appearance at museum exhibit

By Barbara Curtin

Statesman Journal

September 19, 2010

A year ago, visitors might have thought it strange to view watercolors, photographs and sculptures at Mission Mill Museum.

However, the new Willamette Heritage Center, formed by the merger of the museum and the Marion County Historical Society, has a broader role, said Executive Director Peter Booth. "Cultivating Creativity," an art show about agriculture, fits right in.

"This reaches out beyond our original mission to tell another aspect of the Willamette Valley heritage," said Booth. "It mixes the long, long trail of agriculture, which dates back to the native peoples ... with the artistic culture of the Willamette Valley."

The show, which opens Friday, features highlights from Oregon State University's Art About Agriculture collection. Each year since 1983, the College of Agricultural Sciences has held a juried show with that theme, and several winners have been purchased for the school's permanent collection. The Willamette Heritage Center's Keni Sturgeon chose works by artists with connections to Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties.

The pieces in the show include watercolors, acrylics, sculpture, photography and prints. Many portray agriculture directly, as in a photograph of a tulip field in mist, a pen-and-ink drawing of draft horses at work, and paintings of bountiful fields.

Other images simply suggest the work of farming, such as a moody photograph of an ancient farm truck, apparently stored for decades in a barn.

Booth's favorite is a watercolor titled "The Ladies of Thistle Hill Nos. 42, 65, 63" by Nancy McMorris. It shows three cows



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This forged steel piece entitled "Eat Your Veggies" by Alan Graham is part of the "Cultivating Creativity" exhibit at the Willamette Heritage Center in Salem.

At a glance

What: Cultivating Creativity: Art From the OSU Art About Agriculture Permanent Collection

When: Friday through Dec. 24. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays

Where: Willamette Heritage Center, 1313 Mill St. SE

Admission: \$6, \$5 ages 55 and older, \$4 students (with ID), \$3 for ages 6-17, free for children younger than 6

Artists include: Marge Anderson, Lebanon; Claudia Cave, Corvallis; Marti Cheek, Jefferson; Gloria Cornelius, Salem; Chris Cummings, Amity; Mark Elliot, Dallas; Paul Gentry, Independence; Alan Graham, Salem; Wendy Huhn, Dexter; Christopher Irving, Silverton; Marg Johansen (1923-2004), McMinnville; Peter Krupp, Albany; Jean Lea, Salem; Bill Marshall, Albany; Nancy McMorris, Albany; Kurt Norlin, Albany; Connie Petty (1926-2007), Albany; Bob Pool, Salem; J. Elizabeth Santone, Carlton; Jim Shull, Silverton; Susan Trueblood Stuart, Salem; Charles True, Silverton; April Waters, Salem; Diane Wenzel, Albany; Don Whitaker, Lebanon. Other invited artists include: Dale Bunse from Polk County, Jodie Garrison from Marion County.

nosing out toward the viewer from a scarlet background.

"It's taking something realistic out of normal agricultural life and putting a humorous twist to it," said Booth. "It makes you smile when you look at it."

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