

Local artists featured at library show

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

The Friends of the Sisters Library (FOSL) art exhibit for June features local artists Barbara Berry in the community room and Paul Alan Bennett in the computer room.

Berry, a resident of Central Oregon for 22 years, moved with her family to Sisters five years ago to be close to the nature she loves. She is best known for her impressionistic acrylic paintings of landscape close-ups done in bright colors.

"A great reverence for life and for each living thing is the driving force behind my paintings," said Berry.

Her aspen tree paintings could be considered her signature work, although she paints a variety of landscapes as well as horses, old trucks, and a variety of other nature subjects. She also works in oil, pencil, watercolor, and sculpts in clay.

"The use of color and capturing the essence of a subject is the primary focus in my art. Each piece takes on a life of its own and is a doorway in time for the viewer that they can walk through. A magical moment to be remembered. The vibrant colors create emotion and convey a sense of the subject, time, and place," explained Berry.

Berry holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in fine art and art education. Currently she teaches classes at COCC

in drawing and painting. Previously she taught at Colorado Mountain College in Glenwood Springs and Aspen, Colorado.

She has created event posters for local events including the 2006 Sisters Rodeo poster, the Sisters Harvest Faire, Summerfest, and Fall Western Festival from 2006-2009.

Berry said she has been an artist all of her life, starting at four years of age, doing her best to draw what she could see. Private lessons funded by her weekly allowance taught her to draw and paint well. Her artistic pursuits continued through high school, with Berry attending the American Academy of Art in Chicago during the summer, as well as taking every art class she could.

She attended Northern Illinois University, Metropolitan State College in Denver, and the University of Northern Colorado, giving her access to many diverse art styles and techniques, which she incorporated into her work.

Berry's work is currently hanging in Ken Scott's Imagination Gallery in Sisters and Valley Bronze in Joseph, Oregon. All of the original paintings in the library are for sale.

Berry is a member of the Watercolor Society of Oregon and has exhibited in many juried shows, as well as in galleries throughout the West. Her work is in collections

throughout the United States, Europe, and Australia. More of her art can be seen on her website at www.barbaraberry.com. Her contact email is bberry1111@aol.com. Her Watercolor 101 book is available by emailing Berry.

On display in the library computer room are prints by well-known Sisters artist Paul Alan Bennett. According to Bennett, his landscapes being exhibited "reflect the flavor and feel of Oregon east of the Cascades."

Bennett has taught art history, design, drawing, and painting at COCC for many years.

His recognizable "knit" pattern that is incorporated into many of his pieces started with a pair of woolen gloves he purchased on a trip to Istanbul.

"I was curious to see if I could paint the knit look and the designs of the glove in watercolor using gouache paint," Bennett said.

Bennett successfully copied the knit look and found ways to incorporate it into his work.

"Knitting and weaving are common to all cultures, so this look lent itself well to incorporating much of my interests in travel, folk art, and art history. It is also a meditative



PHOTO BY SUE STAFFORD

"Song of Twilight" acrylic original by Barbara Berry.

way to work, and I enjoy that aspect as well," he explained.

Various classes and groups have had the pleasure of participating in Bennett's fun mural workshops where participants work together to create large colorful pieces on a long strip of black paper.

Bennett attended the Maryland Institute of Art for his Bachelor of Fine Arts and received his master's from the University of La Verne in Athens, Greece. His work has been used by card companies, for posters, short story illustrations, book jackets and CD covers.

Numerous awards have been given for Bennett's work, including two awards for best watercolor at the Beaverton Showcase, Best of Show in Co-Arts, best painting award at the Oregon State Fair, as well as numerous

national and regional awards.

Bennett's work is part of the one percent collection for art at Eastern Oregon University and also at COCC. In 2006, 16 of his images were used by Pendleton Woolen Mills to create tapestries.

Much of Bennett's work is available for purchase on his website, www.paulalanbennett.com, including prints, originals, greeting and playing cards. All of the prints at the library are available for \$225 each. Sisters Gallery & Frame Shop on West Hood Avenue also represents Bennett.

Bennett and his wife, Carolyn Platt, are longtime Sisters residents, and their son, Parker, is a graduate of Sisters High School. Platt has taught art at both Sisters Middle School and COCC.

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