

New exhibit explores work of 'desert artist'

In a small ghost town nestled at the edge of the vast landscape of Oregon's Alvord Desert near Steens Mountain, artist John Simpkins has turned a one-room schoolhouse into a working studio. For the past seven years, Simpkins, with only his dog for company, has lived and painted in the schoolhouse, one of the few buildings still standing in Andrews — a town that was home to a mere 150 people during its prime at the turn of the century.

Simpkins moved there after living and creating for many years in Sisters.

Though living in solitude, Simpkins's connections to the region's animals, weather and light patterns inspire paintings that weave together rich, symbolic narratives. Through his art, Simpkins tells his story and the stories that surround him, working intuitively, painting in the moment, free from plans or sketches.

A new exhibit featuring Simpkins' detailed and colorful paintings will open at the High Desert Museum on Saturday, October 27. "Desert Mystic: The Paintings of John Simpkins" explores the artist's inspirations and influences, from religion and spirituality to folk art, symbolism and the tradition of anthropomorphizing animals. The exhibit also reflects on Simpkins' creative process and considers his unique vision and perspective.

"The impressive trove of

accumulated paintings from the past seven years that fill Simpkins' studio is a testament to his robust work ethic," said Museum Curator of Arts and Community Engagement Andries Fourie. "Personifying the tradition of the artist as a mystic and hermit, Simpkins has transformed the Oregon desert into a creative oasis."

Working with the artist, Fourie has created interpretive labels for each of the paintings within the exhibit to guide visitors as they consider the art's colors, layers, subjects, stories and symbolism. The labels offer small snippets of context, allowing viewers an opportunity to explore a deeper understanding and appreciation of Simpkins' work.

Additionally, Museum Donald M. Kerr Curator of Natural History Louise Shirley worked with Fourie and Simpkins, exploring the connection between the paintings and the creatures depicted within them to create a second set of interpretive labels.

"We hope that including natural history labels with the artwork will lend an extra dimension to the visitor experience," Shirley said. "Different aspects of the artwork provided the direction for the labels. For example, I wrote about range expansion in response to 'Victor/Coyote' because the coyote featured in the painting has a map of North America across its body. The coyote



PHOTO PROVIDED

John Simpkins' "Blood Moon" is one of many paintings that will be on display at High Desert Museum.

is also depicted alone, which prompted me to write about the species' behavioral ecology."

Presenting an art exhibition with a connection to natural history lines up seamlessly with the Museum's dedication to inspiring learning on different levels.

"Wildlife and natural history are quite subtle in the High Desert, where things are nuanced and camouflaged," said Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw. "Alternatively, Simpkins' art is big, bold and bright. Connecting the two provides visitors a unique opportunity to discover an appreciation for both art and the natural

resources of the High Desert landscape."

In conjunction with the exhibit, the Museum will welcome Simpkins for an artist reception on November 8, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Find more information online at www.highdesertmuseum.org/simpkins.

"Desert Mystic: The Paintings of John Simpkins" will be on display through February 17, 2019. It is presented with support from *1859 Oregon's Magazine* — Statehood Media and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation.

Boys soccer falls to Newport

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

The boys soccer squad was shut out 0-5 by the Cubs on Thursday, September 27. Newport scored two in the first half and three in the second to secure the win on their home turf.

Coach Rob Jensen noted that Jude Kokesh-Carhart and Skyler Larson played well at center midfield in the second half, and were able to get some good looks at the goal with combos from Jude, Kinnon Rutherford, and Colby Simeral.

Sisters was still without Asher Bachtold, who has been out with a concussion. Jensen told *The Nugget* that the loss of Asher has affected the team, as he is capable of defending the opponents' midfielders.

"We really just failed to defend the counter well, and they had a couple of guys in the center that were able to make us miss," said Jensen.

The Outlaws were to play at home against Cascade on Tuesday, October 2. They will host Woodburn on Thursday.

bliss
HAIR AND NAIL DESIGN

Hair & Nails
Natural & Artificial

541-549-6566
484 W. Washington Ave., Ste. B

JOIN THE
OREGON DRIVE LESS CHALLENGE

Drive less, get ACTIVE!
Get outside, get moving
and win prizes!

OCT. 1-15
Every Trip Counts!
Win Prizes!

DriveLessConnect.com

The Best Fence You'll Never See.®

PET STOP
BY PHANTOM PET FENCE

- Manage via Smart Phone
- GentleSteps™ Training
- Award-Winning Technology
- Best Warranty in Industry
- America's Safest Dog Fence
- 100% Made in the U.S.A.

SAVE \$100 NOW
541-771-2330
phantompetfence.com/save-now/

There once was a cafe
in Sisters,
That served breakfast to
all Missus and Misters,
The fare was all yummy,
The atmosphere chummy,
But in back the chef
worked like a twister...

THE COTTON WOOD CAFE

NOW OPEN 7 days a week, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.
403 E. Hood Ave. | 541.549.2699
Serving Breakfast & lunch

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE

Opportunity to Meet the new City Manager Candidates

Monday, October 8 • 5-6:30 pm
City Hall, 520 E. Cascade Ave.

Attendees will have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss topics of interest in an informal setting.

Light refreshments will be served.

For information contact Kerry Prosser at 541-323-5213.