

**RICHARDS:** Display is in Cindy and Duncan Campbell Gallery

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allowed Richards to capture the energy, personality and essence of her subjects. Richards studied their stories and learned interesting facts which helped inform her final images.

“I like to do lots of research so I bring the story to the quilt and share aspects of people’s lives. I love bringing science into my work. I like to teach with my quilts and enhance people’s appreciation for these worthy human beings and hopefully feel my fascination with

nature,” said Richards.

Richards said when she was pondering who to feature on an art quilt, she decided to introduce people who were grassroots folk heroes. The first portrait quilt she did was Sitting Bull, who she learned was a Hunkpapa Lakota chief and holy man known for his leadership and compassion for his people.

“I’ve always found Indian culture compelling and I was able to put all those feelings into the quilt,” said Richards.

Her next quilt was of sharpshooter Annie Oakley, who was friends with Sitting Bull and worked in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show with him. Richards’ next quilt was of folk music legend Bob Dylan. After completing the

Dylan quilt she made a proposal to the SOQS to have a special exhibit and they accepted. With only three quilts finished, Richards had to produce nine quilts in nine months to make the deadline. She laughed when she remembered the effort it took to fulfill her obligation. The final products were worth the late nights and have served as ambassadors for insights into Americans both well-known and obscure.

Hearing people’s feedback from the show has been rewarding. Richards wanted to provide access to inspiring role models. She hopes it will get people thinking about how they, too, can have a positive impact on others, whether big or small.

“What are we supposed to be as human beings? We can choose to be hateful and complaining or do we have some kind of deed to take on in life? People don’t start out as folk heroes; something happens in their life where they do something that makes a difference and they build on that,” said Richards.

There are also four botanists in the exhibit as well as musicians, activists, an aviator, innovator, and Arctic explorer. The group has something of interest for just about everybody and it invites viewers to learn more about people who lived life fully and with a purpose. After the show’s final exhibit during this year’s SOQS, Richards will say goodbye to



PHOTO PROVIDED

Artist Leotie Richards with her fabric portrait of Annie Oakley, American sharpshooter.



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Farmworkers’ civil rights advocate Cesar Chavez.

the quilts and let them move on to their new homes.

Over the past two years, she’s been working in wool. Once she learned how to work with wool, she took the medium in an innovative direction. She’s been doing botanical studies and has done three pieces. One is focused on coleus plants, another on tropical plants, and the last on succulents. She just taught a week-long course using the technique she developed and hopes to keep teaching more classes.

For Richards, it’s not about recognition but more about her artwork teaching and inspiring people to learn along with her.

“I could do more publicity about my work, but I’m really pretty relaxed about that. I had a whole other career as a graphic designer for 35 years. Right now I’m taking a rest. The fabric portraits took it out of me. I’m doing projects for myself like throw blankets and pillows with wool applique techniques. During my SOQS exhibit at the Campbell Gallery, I’ll sit in the gallery and sew those flower designs on those pillows. I’m not good at doing nothing,” she said.

The Cindy and Duncan Campbell Gallery is located inside the Sisters Art Works Building, 204 W. Adams Ave.

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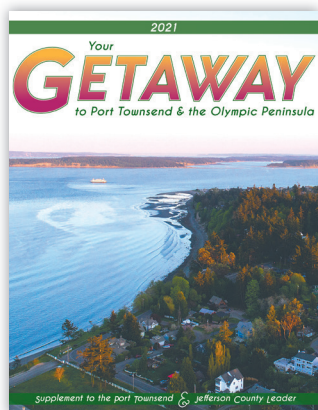
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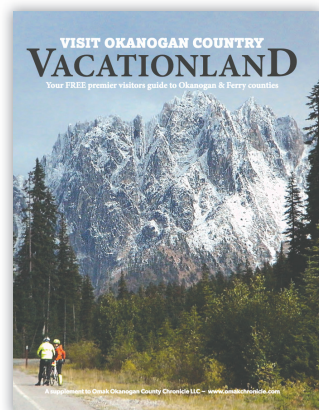
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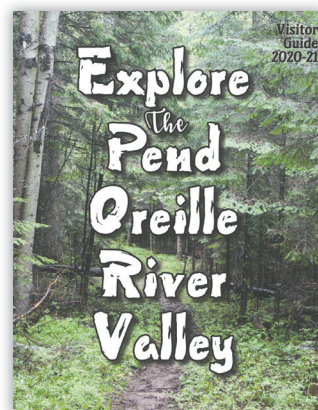
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