

Maude I. Kerns Art Center began as the Eugene Art Center in 1955. They started out in a building on the Lane County Fairgrounds, "a huge cold space divided by curtains, separating classes, with one tiny oil stuck in a corner," according to one of their brochures. As soon as possible, they moved into a cottage donated by Maude I. Kerns with funds she also provided.

Who was Maude I. Kerns? The name is often heard in Eugene but few know much about her. According to Anne Sheffield, in her brochure "Maude I. Kerns, The Artist," Kerns was a pioneer, not like her grandmother who "walked two-thirds of the way to Oregon, often helping with the cattle," but as an explorer in the fields of art, spirituality, and sharing.

"After graduating from the University of

vested most of her salary for summer art study trips — to Provincetown, Chicago, or Carmel — and the rest was left as generous gifts toward learning experiences for others."

The fruits of one of those gifts may be seen today on the southeast corner of 15th and Villard. This once was the Fairmont Presbyterian Church, which was built in the 1890s. In May of 1963, through assistance from Maude Kerns and the Junior League of Eugene, the Eugene Art Center bought the church and remodeled it, adding, over the years, new classrooms and installing equipment such as darkroom facilities, a kiln, etc. They also changed their name at that time to the Maude I. Kerns Art Center, in honor of their staunchest supporter.

According to their Catalogue of Classes for 1975-76, the philosophy of the Art Center is that they feel "creativity to be the most vital principal of human existence and find our purpose in providing an outlet for the creative use of leisure time. Maude Kerns is a place where people can share inspiration . . . By sharing ourselves with others, we can mutually develop our own creativity and thus enhance the quality of our lives."

Sharing is what the Art Center is all about. They offer a multifaceted program of classes, workshops, shows (in both presentational and performance-oriented art forms), projects and special events.

Each month the Art Center offers a variety of classes and workshops in the fine and applied arts, taught, usually, by professional staff and visiting artists. The Art Center is open to both the serious and casual student. Instruction is generally on a one to one basis and the end result varies with the skill and interest of each student.

Prices for individual classes and workshops vary but the Art Center's goal is to keep them as low as possible. Also, the Donn Scharp Memorial Scholarship fund is set up to provide aid toward art classes for those students who are interested but, for financial reasons, unable to take classes. Work study scholarships are available to adults who show artistic potential and have a strong interest in the arts. Senior Citizens are invited to take classes for half the regular tuition price.

Winter classes are already closed this term, but for a listing of workshops coming up in the month of February, see the schedule listed below.

The Art Center continues to be interested in finding new art forms to showcase. They have sponsored several local performers and major theater productions in their main gallery. In 1974 the fledgling Eugene Theatre Company (the core of which later became the basis of the Oregon Repertory Theatre) had their first production there, *Three Penny Opera*. The Company came back in 1976 to perform *Fashion* in the same space. In 1975 the experimental theatre group The NewMime Circus performed three one-act plays. Last year they were back with a full complement of plays, different ones for each of the three weekends they performed. Right now, George and Priscilla Lauris are performing



The Mezzanine Gallery offers a place for smaller displays. Currently the space is being used as a continuation of Mel Vincent's Watercolor exhibit in the main gallery.

The Belle of Amherst there. They complete their run this weekend.

Each year the Center runs festivals through which artists and craftspeople can sell their work. In the Fall, the Clothesline Sale exclusively features paintings, prints, drawings and lithographs. The Christmas Festival exhibits handcrafted items for gift giving. Coming up, near Easter, is the Earthworks/Artworks Spring Sale, consisting of antiques, plants and paintings.

The Art Center also maintains three galleries and a gift shop. All are open daily, including weekends, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and are free of charge.

The Henry Korn Gallery (also called the main gallery) is located in the old church's main structure which, incidentally, is the oldest existing church building in Eugene. The Gallery Committee selects what will be displayed in this gallery.

On display now are several Oregon scenic watercolors by nationally known artist Mel Vincent. His show will run through Jan. 29.

Beginning Feb. 3, following a reception from 7 to 9 p.m. the evening before, is a collaboration of three artists called "Nexus." It will consist of 28 completed

works in various media by Susanna Kuo, Marie Lyman and Alice Van Leunen; either done individually or in collaboration as a Nexus piece. It will run until Feb. 26.

The mezzanine gallery is a smaller, more intimate space particularly suited to photographs, prints, drawings or smaller works. Currently the Vincent showing is in that space as well.

Finally, adjoining the main gallery is a rental sales gallery through which people can buy or rent a large variety of works of art for a nominal fee. The advantage of this service is two fold. First, at a low cost, a home or office can have a new painting each month if desired. Second, before purchasing a painting, one may rent it for a month or more to decide whether or not the work is suitable. Each month features a different Artist of the Month with a large number of works by the particular artist.

On display now is a series of paintings by Richard Hazelton, a past president of the Watercolor Society of Oregon, an associate member of the American Watercolor Society and a member of the Arts in Oregon Association.

From Feb. 7 through March 6 David McCosh's watercolors will be featured. McCosh, who is considered one of the Northwest's foremost painters, is a Eugene

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This fine fellow is but one of the creations to come out of the Art Center's classes.

Oregon in 1899," Sheffield writes, "Miss Kerns pursued her training at the California School of Fine Arts and at Columbia University, before teaching in Seattle. In 1913, Miss Kerns traveled through Europe to study the Modern Art Movement — the Cubists, Futurists, Bauhaus, and Abstract Expressionists. By 1921, she became head of the University of Oregon Art Education department — a position she held until her retirement in 1947 . . .

"Always ready to learn, in 1928 she went on a world cruise, to study fresco, tempera, and woodblock techniques — and to discover new subject matter. All of Miss Kerns' investigations were brought back for the benefit of her students, her paintings, the university, and the town. She was devoted to Mrs. Gertrude Bass Warner's plans for a Museum of Art on campus, and Miss Kerns helped to prepare and select some of the first displays. Mrs. Warner's dream was to provide a bridge, through art, between the East and West, to generate world peace and understanding. Miss Kerns continued upholding this ideal, and even left an endowment to the Art History department, which has been used to bring visiting professors of Oriental art to Eugene.

"Although Miss Kerns collected fine textiles and dramatic hats, she saved and in-



These guys, and others of their ilk, may be seen hanging around the gift shop.

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