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ARTS



Graphic artist David Foster uses a portable studio in a Volkswagen bus to create computer landscape paintings. His work will be on display through Nov. 15 at the LaVerne Krause Gallery in Room 101 Lawrence Hall.

Artist creates paintings bit by bit

By Karen Engels

Graphic artist David Foster speaks with pixels rather than paintbrushes in his computer landscape paintings, now on display at the LaVerne Krause Gallery in Room 101 Law-rence Hall.

Foster, 67, a University professor emeritus, creates his landscapes by using a computer, a stylus and a computer graphics tablet. This wouldn't be unusual except that he does most of his work while sitting in his Volkswagen bus, sliding door open, gazing out and graphically reproducing the Oregon scenery he loves. The colorful results, which

he adjusts and prints upon arrival at home, resemble watercolors, silk screens and colored sand layered in a jar. Many of his works portray small towns such as Sumpter, and landscapes such as Christmas Valley and the Blue Mountains in Eastern

which gives him a choice of 250 colors from a computer palette, but can use only 16 colors in any given work. "My crayola box has gone from eight crayons in grade school to 16," he said.

Foster, who headed the Department of Fine and Applied Arts from 1978 to 1983, introduced the first computer to the department in 1977, when he taught graphics. With a desk-bound computer, he did most of his work at home, but then "I got curious about getting out in the sticks with the computer."

The decision to put his studio on wheels wasn't a new concept for Foster. While in high school, he tore the back seat out of his 1929 Plymouth. In that comfortable haven, he made an arts studio of sorts, where he sketched. Later, he explored the state on his motorcycle with sketch pad and pens, ready to draw.

His VW bus, which is more technically advanced than

both of his previous "studios," is a "return to early days of youth," Foster said. "I guess I'm a perpetual adolescent, still searching."

Foster's VW studio has been refined over time. Told at first that using his computer outdoors on a generator wouldn't work, Foster persisted and finally found a Honda portable gas-powered generator that did. It now rests comfortably affixed to the front bumper. To protect his delicate equipment, he has mounted his computer and monitor on inner tubes where they "float" above the bumps of the road.

"Lots of people are doing computer graphics," Foster said. "I'm one of the few crazy enough to drag myself out in the woods. That's the difference."

The show will continue through Nov. 15. Admission is free. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday.

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