

Coast galleries offer more than gulls

Fine art is being sold more frequently along the coast, as wealthy people seek decorations

By Jeff Barnard
The Associated Press

LINCOLN CITY — When the Freed Gallery was being built, Phyllis Yes heard it was going to be a gift shop, like thousands of others on the Oregon Coast featuring seagulls and breaking waves distinguished only by the medium used to paint them.

"I just groaned," said Yes, an art professor at Lewis and Clark College in Portland.

"Then I heard it was a gallery with someone looking for real artists, and I was thrilled. I have shown there every year since it has opened."

The Freed is one of a number of galleries that have sprouted on the central Oregon Coast in the past three or four years offering high-end, high-quality art that is shipped around the world.

What's going on?

Gallery owner Lee Freed says it's simply part of the booming Oregon economy. People who own expensive new houses in the Portland area are buying second homes along the coast. They want art on their walls.

Others, with money to spend, vacation at the venerable Salishan Resort in neighboring Gleneden Beach and tour along U.S. Highway 101, with its spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean.

The Freed, the Triad Gallery in Seal Rock, Earthworks in Yachats, the Gallery at Salishan and the

Ryan Gallery in Lincoln City have joined together to publish a brochure.

"If there are more galleries, they will attract more art-loving public," said Triad Gallery owner Quirina Kryger.

"The state is very interested in making the coast an art destination. The Oregon Coast Counsel of the Arts is very helpful in that respect."

Freed's gallery is her first. She sold real estate in Chicago for 35 years but had a beach house in Oregon. After her husband died, she decided to turn her love of art into a second career.

"We have no seascapes and no seagulls," said Freed. "What I tell people is God made them better. Just go outside and look."

What she has are paintings by Yes, ceramics by Lincoln City artist Stan Beppu, mobiles by Seattle artist Myrna Orsini and sculptures by Arizona artist John Henry Waddell.

Prices range from \$3 for a napkin ring by Beppu to \$200,000 for a bronze wall sculpture of dancers by Waddell.

Freed travels the country looking for artists. She met Waddell after her cousin commissioned him to do a statue of a harp player for Ravinia Park in Chicago, the summer home of the Chicago Symphony. Freed persuaded him to show at her gallery.

Waddell is best known for his work, "That Which Might Have Been," commemorating the deaths of four girls killed in a 1963 Birmingham, Ala., church bombing, displayed at the Unitarian Church in Phoenix. He recent-

ly cast a copy for Birmingham, Ala., but the mother of one of the victims objected to its being displayed there.

Waddell, who has a foundry in Cornville, Ariz., also made the figures of two tennis players at the United States Tennis Association in Flushing Meadows, N.Y., as well as the dancers displayed outside the Herberger Theater in Phoenix.

The gallery business is a tough one, said Kryger.

"You really need to know and love the art business," she said. "Otherwise, you are better off selling hamburgers."

When it comes to pulling in customers, it's sometimes like any other roadside attraction. The Freed Gallery has a striking design with big windows that let people see what's inside.

Rick Montgomery, president of the Signature Restaurant Division of Sir Corp. in Toronto, Ontario, was one who stopped to look.

He was touring the Oregon wine country last year to build up the cellar of the restaurants he runs when he decided to take a side trip to the coast. Driving along Highway 101, he spotted a big Plexiglas mobile of jumping salmon in the window of the Freed Gallery and paid about \$6,000 for it.

The mobile, by Orsini, how hangs in the Far Niente Napa Grill in Toronto's financial district.

"I was really pleased to see something of this quality that kind of jumped out at me as I was passing by," said Montgomery. "This is unique and different and just what we wanted."



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