

Back to the present

The University's history museum reopens its doors to the pasts of Oregon and the Northwest

BY CANELA WOOD / HALEY GORDON
NEWS REPORTER / FREELANCE REPORTER

Displays will be dusted off, artifacts brought out of storage and hammers set aside for Saturday's preview of the new exhibit spaces in the University's Museum of Natural and Cultural History.

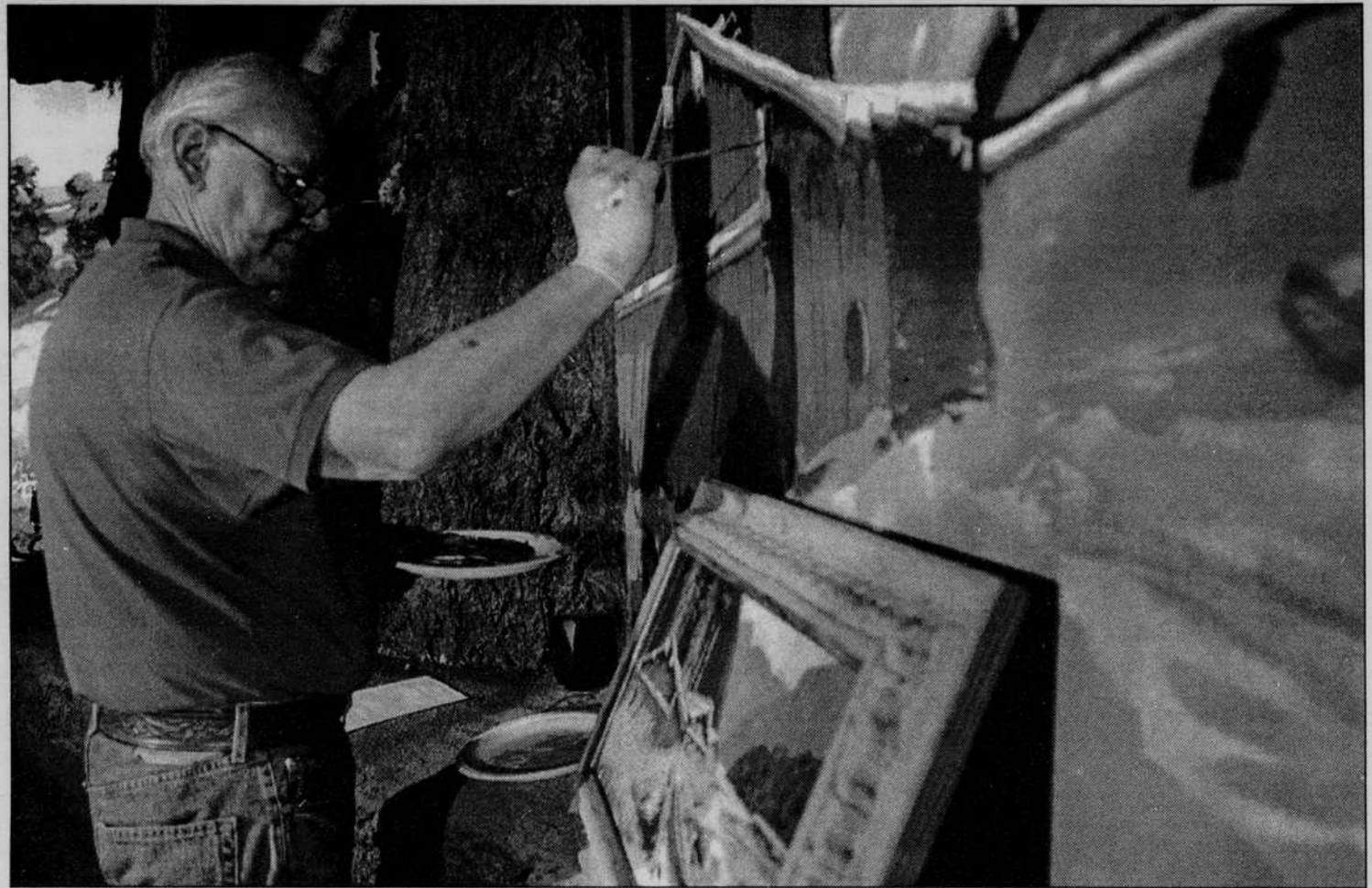
Construction that has been in progress since December will be halted to allow visitors to experience the museum's changes and learn about the upcoming events there.

During the Saturday preview, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., visitors can see the new permanent exhibit, "Oregon — Where Past is Present," which will re-create sights and sounds from Oregon's past with large hand-painted murals showing the landscapes in four Oregon regions.

Artifacts, sound effects, text panels, diagrams and re-creations, like one of a 500-year-old cedar-plank house, will make the exhibit more than glass-cased artifacts. Visitors will be able to watch the exhibit "come to life in three dimensions," said Cindi Budlong, Museum of Natural and Cultural History exhibit designer.

"Because the exhibits we had were getting old, we wanted to restructure to focus on the cultural and natural history of the Northwest," museum Director C. Melvin Aikens said.

The changing exhibit hall will feature "Lewis, Clark & Company: Explorers, Ambassadors and Naturalists," and will stay at the museum for



Artist Don Prechtel paints a mural from an oil painting in the Museum of Natural History on Thursday afternoon. The Museum will hold an open house this weekend.

DANIELLE HICKEY | PHOTO EDITOR

six months after the February opening.

Other new additions include a theater space and an updated media and education room where children will be able to learn hands-on.

"We've created it to appeal to school kids and to adults ... It's quite a challenge to span the whole range," Aikens said.

"It's a humongous improvement; it's more cohesive and easier for teachers to identify a story instead of bits and pieces," said Jennifer Willson, a graduate student in education programming.

"The preview is intended to show the museum's contributors, volunteers, friends and inter-

ested public how the project is coming along and to thank them for their support," Aikens said.

Cost estimates of the renovation, done by Presentation Design Group, are at about \$1 million, said Aikens.

The cost of the renovation was covered by private gifts because there was no University appropriation for it, Aikens said.

In addition to the preview, the museum will begin its fall lecture series starting at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 22, in the Knight Law Center and continuing for five consecutive Fridays. The series will feature "Uncommon Treasures: Stories from the UO Museums and Library Collections."

During the preview, visitors can buy memberships at half price, pick up materials on the upcoming lecture series and eat and drink free cookies and punch. The event will "build momentum for our grand re-opening Feb. 11 and 12," said Judi Pruitt, administrative program assistant.

"We want to let people know (the renovation is) happening and coming along. ... I think people will come all day," Aikens said.

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Haley Gordon is a freelance reporter for the Emerald



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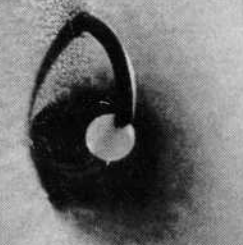
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