

'MISSING YOUR FACE'

In-person reception June 18 at Art Center East

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

LA GRANDE — Although the current exhibit at Art Center East debuted on May 7, an in-person reception is planned for June 18 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

"Missing Your Face: Masks of Location, Isolation, and Transformation" features the works of two mask makers — Matt Fagan of La Grande and Tony Fuemmeler of Portland.

ACE is located at 1006 Penn Ave. Art exhibits are free and open to the public. COVID restrictions apply — please social distance and wear masks when entering the building.

The idea for this show started several years ago. The thought, Fuemmeler said, was to bring together two mask artists from opposite sides of the state.

The show went on the backburner, though, until 2020 when everything came to a halt due the coronavirus pandemic.

"Everyone was in various emotional places. There was a lot of unknown," Fuemmeler said.

The spark reignited and the artists set to work making masks.

"That kept me going through isolation," Fagan said.

The word "mask" has permeated our lives in the past year, but the creations by these two artists are nothing like you'd see in the grocery store.

"The 'mask maker' hashtag was a lot more fun before COVID," Fagan said with a laugh.

Fuemmeler's background is theatrical design, and most of his mask-making is for the theater.

"The mask is not about disguise, but the literal face of the character," he said.

His work is influenced by the comic masks of the Italian Renaissance, and contemporary theatrical



Submitted

"Tree Spirit" by
Tony Fuemmeler



Submitted

"Shannon" by Matt Fagan



Submitted

"Exuberant" by
Tony Fuemmeler



Submitted

"Space Cowboy" by Matt Fagan

"The 'mask maker' hashtag was a lot more fun before COVID."

— Matt Fagan, on how the word "mask" took on a new connotation in 2020

masks of the 20th century.

His work for this show features a variety of three-dimensional masks, as well as two-dimensional ink prints.

To create the prints, he photographed a mask and then superimposed an image. His goal, he said, was to illustrate the influence of

places we've been.

"I found myself fascinated with doubling the human form with a sense of place," he said. "I was thinking how we carry place with us — what if I showed that literally?"

Fagan's path to making masks was by way of something to do in

his spare time.

He earned a bachelor's degree in English, and a master's in writing. But when he finished the program, he didn't have much desire to write anymore.

So he started painting.

"It was just for me," he said. "I just painted canvases for like 10 years."

Those paintings became decoration at a comic book store he co-owned in Chicago.

"I used that as my gallery," he said.

Then, in 2003, he made a mask for his Halloween costume.

"I really enjoyed it. It was the first thing I'd made in three dimensions," he said.

He continued making masks.

"Once a year I would make myself a mask for Halloween," he said.

He moved to La Grande in 2014. He continued making masks, but ramped up his process to prepare for this show, which features 30 creations.

A virtual tour of the show can be found at artcentereast.org.

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High 71 Low 45
Cloudy

SATURDAY
High 80 Low 52
Clouds and sun

SUNDAY
High 88 Low 55
Showers possible