



GOOD NEIGHBORS

Gay and lesbian Oregonians are laying the foundation to build a stronger community

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PHOTOS BY MARTY DAVIS

Elemental roots Portland lesbian artists draw from the spirits BY TJ NORRIS

Monte Shelton and Debra Shaffer have more in common than their 20-year friendship, though the connection is by no means common.

Both women have been involved for years in intense spiritual energy work and healing meditation that emanates genuinely through their art, which is on display through July 24 at Everyday Wine.

"I move back and forth from the spiritual to the physical realm," Shaffer's artist statement reveals. During a recent trip to a rain forest in Washington, she found herself enraptured by the element of a blazing fireplace. It was a cold and rainy weekend, and she just started drawing the lapping flames, remarking "it felt like a passage I was moving through. I saw the energy of the South, the chaos of change in its conscious and subconscious states."

This profound experience is reflected in "Tree Giving Birth," a cryptic, Gorey-esque ink drawing on paper. "I see things in

trees, a nurturing energy," Shaffer says, and in these trees she images powers that are visible just beneath the surface. The drawing depicts iconographic imagery, including a bear's paw print, which, Shaffer notes, "is a symbol of the West, of death, of letting go."

Shaffer has re- and deconstructed her cabin experience in multiple pieces currently on view. This is her very first exhibition of drawings, as she has primarily worked with clay. Her love of solid lines allows her to transition easily between mediums, choosing ink because "I like the darkness of inks, I want really black blacks."

In similar fashion, Shelton's "Island with Three Trees and Green Sea" is based on nature's life cycle. One dead tree stump reflects the same shape and dimension of a fully green sibling on a nearby island. A "living" log floats out to sea, illuminated with a car-lighter orange inner glow. Shelton describes the quantum influence of these splintered floating stumps as "moving under



Debra Shaffer (left) and Monte Shelton

their own power" and explains that her tree forms actually come from a Portland park she visits with Lillian, her Labrador retriever.

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