

**ART**

# Disco party art house

Creation Gallery and Design deposits queer art from around the country right on our doorstep—with glittery flair

BY GARY MORRIS



Korey Smith, Craig Fuller and Kevin Cox (from left) ensconced in gay art at Creation Gallery

Portland is not generally mentioned, at least initially, in discussions of the centers of American queer culture. That honor usually goes to San Francisco, New York and Los Angeles, with passing nods to gay resorts like Provincetown, Mass.; Fire Island, N.Y.; and Palm Springs, Calif.

But Portland's queer-owned galleries are multiplying as we speak. Author and art aficionado Craig Fuller opened one of the most original this summer—complete with a disco dance party. Creation Gallery and Design, run by three gay men, offers a gallery and decorating service in Southeast Portland with an emphasis on queer art.

Fuller's collaborators are Kevin Cox, a buyer for an electronics company and part-time designer, and Korey Smith, an entrepreneur with a design and decorating background. Kerry Kurth, a Portland graphic artist and interior designer, will also work with the gallery on offshoot projects, such as "staging"—redecorating houses to make them more marketable.

Creation is not your garden-variety gallery. For one thing, it's located in a private home in Mount Scott, not in the Pearl District or a Beaverton strip mall.

For another, one of its missions is to provide art with a price tag that won't induce apoplexy. Everything is original and costs between \$50 and \$1,800—most is in the \$200-\$400 range.

And Fuller and Company intend to focus some of the gallery's attention on the community, with a fund-raiser planned for a different organization every month. The first was an Aug. 24 benefit soiree for Swan House, an HIV/AIDS service center. Creation donated 40 percent of its art sale proceeds to the nonprofit.

The gallery's June kickoff was a combination disco party (complete with lighted floor and heavy beats) and art show. This gave local culture vultures, as well as aging disco queens, a chance to shake their groove things while viewing a wide range of pieces in a variety of

media—oil paintings, watercolors, drawings and, from one gay artist, salvaged windows reborn as canvases. The subjects are equally diverse—neoclassical themes, Van Gogh-style still lifes, urbanscapes, Dali-esque phantasmagoria and shimmering images of embracing men and kissing women.



Something for the girls

"It all started [a few] months ago after a trip to Hawaii," says Fuller. "When I got home, I got into this creative process that I couldn't shut off. I just wanted to create."

This impulse led, as such impulses often do, to the Internet, where he began to research affordable art. "I started buying stuff, and pretty soon I had this collection, so I created a small gallery in the house."

Before he knew it, he had acquired 200 pieces. "I couldn't believe the prices," Fuller

continues. "I would spend literally six or seven hours a day on the Internet, studying the art, specifically on eBay and other auction sites. I was trying to figure out the catch. How are these people selling such wonderful art so cheap? ... Every time the mail would come I'd open it up and think, 'This is absolutely beautiful.'"

Like many avid art buyers, he began to develop relationships with the artists. "They can't get into galleries—too many artists and too few galleries—and a lot of them live in obscure parts of the country with no galleries at all.... Most of them said they love to create. If they make enough money to pay for their supplies, they're happy."

Still not sure what to do with both the art or the creative rush, Fuller learned that the house next door, owned by his sister, was being vacated. He convinced her to rent it to him and moved in his massive collection.

Now expanded to 400 pieces, the collection includes a substantial portion by gay artists or with gay themes. Fuller mentions one of his most cherished by a straight woman from the East Coast who excels at rendering abstract male nudes: "I love doing homoerotic art!" she told him.

Andy Weissman of Illinois uses neoclassical motifs to telling effect. Another of Fuller's favorites is Portland artist Dean Sitwell, who paints simple, striking images on reclaimed windows from salvage yards.

Most of the walls in the 3,000-square-foot home that houses the gallery, which is open by appointment only, are covered. Seeing paintings and drawings in such a setting, rather than in the insular zone of the typical cramped (or stark) gallery, has a surprising effect, allowing the viewer to experience the work more intimately.

This ties in with Fuller's idea of the transformative power of handmade art. "I believe that original art holds people's energy; the energy of the artist stays in the art. And people respond to it differently than they would to a poster. I'm connecting the artist's creations with other people—so, Creation Gallery."

The new gallery owner sees much larger possibilities. "A multitude of wonderful things are going to happen in this place," he says with infectious enthusiasm.

So far these include a hosted gallery space to let people "experience an art gallery in a private setting," additional fund-raisers (Basic Rights Oregon and Cascade AIDS Project are two in the forefront of the collaborators' minds), a design and decorating service that would let people rent the art, a kind of ongoing queer psychic fair in the house and, of course, a rentable disco den complete with twirling, silver glitter ball. **J**

CREATION GALLERY AND DESIGN is open by appointment only at 8419 S.E. Clatsop Court. Call them at 503-788-7651.

GARY MORRIS is a Portland free-lance writer.

fall  
**PLANT SALE**

Sunday, September 29 '02  
Cedar Hills Recreation Center  
South of Hwy. 26 (exit 68)  
at Cedar Hills Blvd. & Park Way  
11 AM - 3 PM (members only: 10-11)

**The BERRY BOTANIC GARDEN**

636-4112

**VISUALIZE YOUR Inner Beauty**

- Personal Image Design
- Hair & Wig Styling
- Specializing in Trans-Formation
- Professional Makeup
- Exp. with feature film & TV
- Friendly Private Salon

CHRISTINA'S  
*Authentic Creations*

503  
286-7000

**DIGNIFIED PET SERVICES**

*Cremation & Memorials For Your Companion*

- Unique Cremation Urns
- Memorial Jewelry
- Personalized Caskets
- Granite Monuments
- Books & Literature

8976 SW Tualatin Sherwood Road  
Tualatin OR 97062  
Phone (503) 885-2211  
www.DignifiedPetServices.com  
*(A Division of Cascade Funeral Directors, Inc)*

**WESTOVER HEIGHTS**  
C L I N I C

**Offering general internal medicine and excelling in sexual health care**

*Serving the community for 17 years*

2330 NW Flanders  
Suite 207  
**503-226-6678**