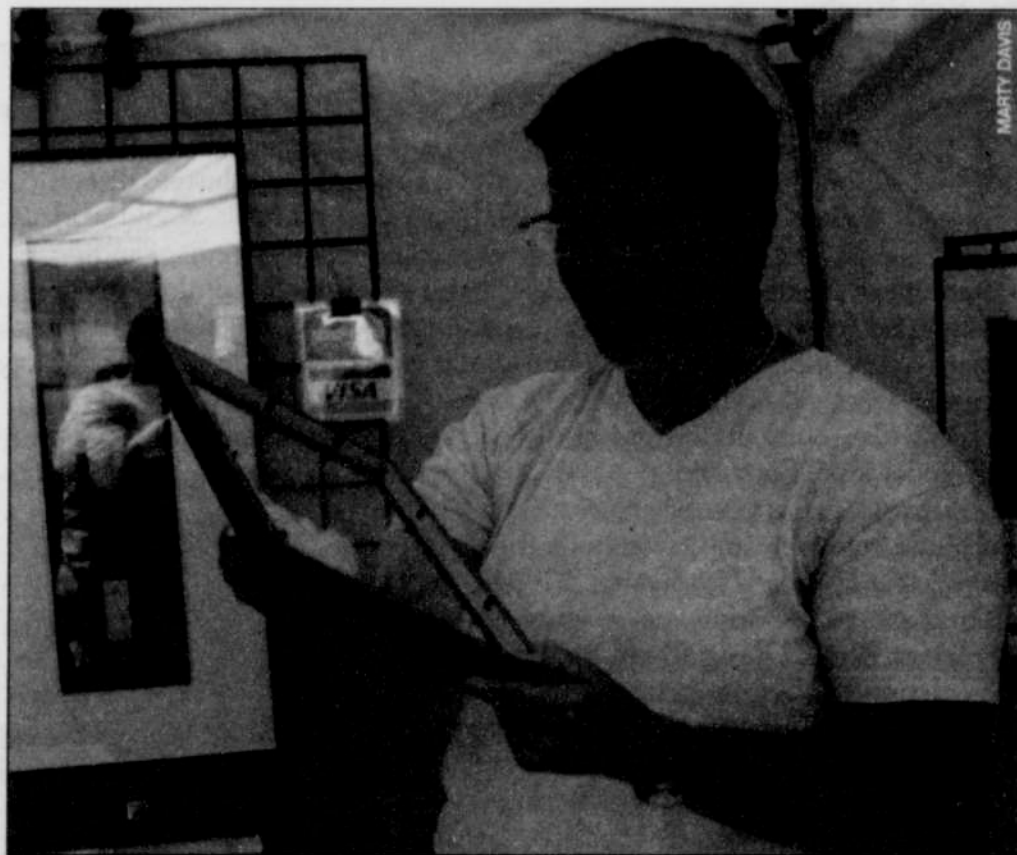


She was attracted to the market's grassroots nature and to the camaraderie among vendors. "As a photographer, I work side by side with other photographers at the market; we are our own subgroup."

Flood holds a master's degree in fine arts and has been a photographer for 27 years. She wants to expand her work to other venues but has no intention of leaving the market.

"Like all work groups I have been a part of," she says, "we get together to celebrate milestones, and whenever someone has an opening of their work, vendors show up to support their friends."

Nash, who also has an art degree, saw the market as an opportunity to test the salability of her work. "Part of the reason I moved to Portland was to vend at Saturday Market," she says. "It gave me the chance to work as an artist."



Photographer Verone Flood has been selling her photos at the market for four years.

In addition to vending at the market, all of these women are deeply involved in making the organization that operates it successful, and this open-air marketplace has unquestionably grown during the past 31 years, as has the quality of items offered by its vendors. The nonprofit structure is member-driven. The longer a vendor is affiliated, the better his or her choices become



Rainbow duds are the specialty of Out of the Closet Artwear.

Before setting up her booth, she worked in the food service industry, "pulling drafts at McMenamins." Watching all the tin cans go out the back door gave her the idea to create treasures out of trash. Strongly committed to the recycling principle, she began thinking about ways to create art out of "a simple item": tin cans with designs she creates using an acetylene torch.

Nash would sell her lanterns to her co-workers on payday. "I'd sit down, have a beer, set out 10 lanterns and sell them to co-workers, until the bosses said no."

She sold the lanterns where she could, ending up at the initial First Thursday in the Pearl District. Her success at that event convinced her she could make a living with her art. Portland Saturday Market was the next step, and she has been there ever since.

Nash can claim a group of collectors of her work who stop in regularly to see what new item she has created. "When I see them coming," she says, "I know I'll have a sale."

She likes the independence the market gives her and the exposure she experiences as an artist. For Nash, her market booth is her primary sales venue, and it seems to be working for her. She's in the process of buying a house.

for a vending spot, but Weinhaus is quick to encourage other alternative artisans to apply. "Everybody gets treated with respect," she says, and the cost is reasonable, in addition to providing a community where the artisan will get support and encouragement. The emphasis is on being a good neighbor.

The future might seem iffy to outsiders, since the Ankeny Development Plan seeks major changes in the area. But Portland Saturday Market has no intention of going away. "We may have to move," Weinhaus says, "or maybe we won't."

It's 4 p.m. on Sunday evening; the market draws to a close, and vendors enter the final frenzy of packing away their goods and taking their booths down until next week. Friends call out to each other; maybe some will meet at a restaurant or pub before heading home, but the sense of community shows its strength as people break down this temporary village. Once again, the site of so much activity becomes just a series of parking lots, but something remains, perhaps a dream.

In a way, Portland Saturday Market is a microcosmic image of what society would be if what people create and how they work together were seen as more significant than who they love and what they do in the privacy of their homes. Homophobia, like all other prejudicial attitudes, doesn't really have to matter, after all. **■**

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