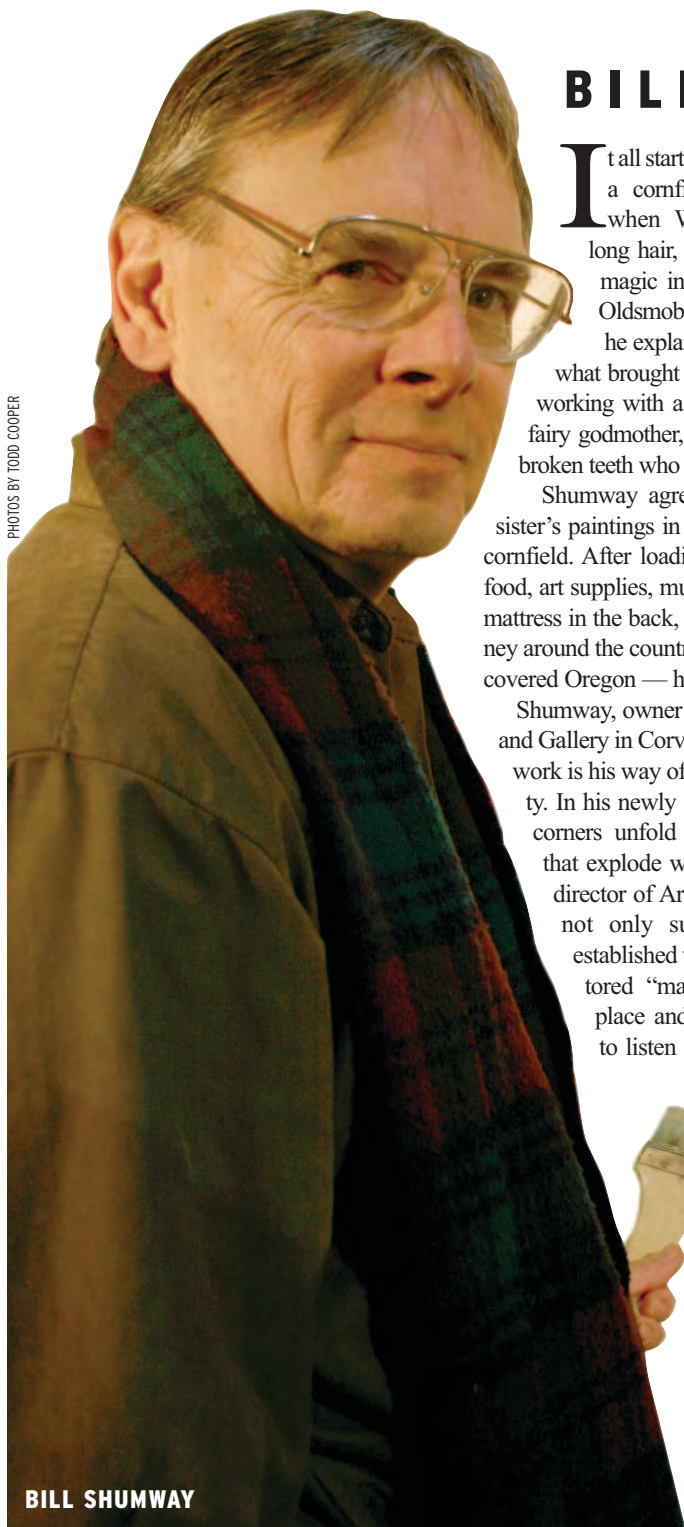


A Dreamworld of Art

By Kim Smith

BILL SHUMWAY FINDS THE LIFE BLOOD.

PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER



BILL SHUMWAY

It all started with an Oldsmobile in a cornfield, back in the days when William Shumway had long hair, a long beard and all the magic in the world. "It was an Oldsmobile sitting in a cornfield," he explained to me when I asked what brought him to Corvallis. "I was working with a man I thought was my fairy godmother, an old Polish man with broken teeth who smelled of garlic."

Shumway agreed to frame the man's sister's paintings in return for the car in the cornfield. After loading the car with canned food, art supplies, musical instruments, and a mattress in the back, Shumway began a journey around the country. It ended when he discovered Oregon — he had found his home.

Shumway, owner of Pegasus Frame Shop and Gallery in Corvallis, said displaying artwork is his way of giving to the community. In his newly expanded gallery space, corners unfold into rooms with walls that explode with art. Victoria Fridley, director of ArtCentric, said Shumway not only supports emerging and established talents but also has mentored "many artists, providing a place and a compassionate heart to listen to their artistic and personal struggles."

It is through this gallery that Shumway became a loved and respected figure in Corvallis, inspiring the community with his passion for the arts.

An animated man with story-telling eyes and peppered gray hair that falls lazily beside his glasses, Shumway



THE CHURN BY BILL SHUMWAY

gestures loudly. It's easy to imagine him holding a paint brush, gliding and pushing paint onto one of his vibrant compositions. He captures the essence of the natural world with the abstract beauty of his stroke: wild crows, mysterious wolves, aerial landscapes and tranquil waters. His body of work captures the spirituality of nature, the psychology of the landscape, and the simple beauty of the mundane.

Many paintings are based on dreams, which often instruct and inspire him. "I have painted from my dreams all my life. Still do," he said. "They are very important to me, and I don't see any difference between a dream and the act of painting."

His studio is adjacent to his home. Here Shumway escapes the financial pressures of the gallery business, enters into his intuitive world of dreams and communicates through color and shape. On the overcast January day

I visited, the room was cold yet inviting, with patterned rugs and paint-speckled surfaces. He explained to me that he likes to keep his studio cold because his mind is not focused on physical comfort. "The second my mind realizes the discomfort of my body," he said, "I must put my brush down. It's over."

"Bill has a Zen beginner's mind," ArtCentric Director Fridley said. "He has kept a childlike sense of wonder and delight that enables him to appreciate a diverse spectrum of others' art but also to keep exploring his own work. His sense of aesthetics is an integral part of him. It informs the way he lives his life, the choices he makes."

His father, a housepainter, taught him aesthetics through music. He and his two brothers, would join in singing harmonies alongside an orchestra of chopsticks and knives, forks and filled water glasses. Though they struggled to make music, they had moments where everything clicked.

"Pop," he said, snapping his fingers. His eyes grew bigger and he leaned in as though about to tell a secret. "There would be this wonderful harmonic overtone that for me was also visual," Shumway said. "It looked like a golden doughnut floating over our heads that released itself from these four voices and became a living entity as long as we cared. As long as we cared."

"That's the essence of what I do when I paint. I am looking for that harmonic overtone escape, when it takes on its own life and has everything to do with whether I care or not. The most important ingredient, then, has become enthusiasm." He grew quieter though his eyes were still sparkling. "And that," he said, "is the lifeblood of painting." ★

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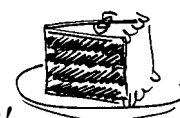
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