

Art Zone

The quest for a gallery district

How would a normal Eugenean describe the part of town that includes the Hult Center, the Hilton, Café Perugino, the White Lotus Gallery, that hellabussy Dutch Bros. stand on 7th Ave., Adam's Place and Luna? Downtown, right?

“It’s *not* downtown. It *is* the Gallery District,” Robert Canaga says. Canaga, who runs OpusSix just across 7th from the Hult Center, stares down anyone who dares disbelieve in his vision. And indeed, it’s a powerful vision: that Eugene is large enough to have distinct little areas in our downtown; that, like Portland’s glorious Hollywood or Belmont or Pearl areas, our walking maps could have areas called Broadway/Pearl or 5th Ave. instead of the ones people might now draw to include “Kids Who Scare Me,” “Derelict Tax Write-Off Buildings Soon to be Sold to Portland Developers” or “Area of the Deep Holes.”

“That’s the psychology of it!” Canaga says. “Why would people be afraid to come to the *gallery district*? ... The sooner we identify it, the sooner people from south Eugene and north Eugene who never come down here will see it as a place to come.”

But first, everyone needs to be on the same page.

The Hult Center has signed on, says Billie Moser, the Hult Center's marketing and public relations manager. When she was putting together this year's publicity, she made sure to include the website for the gallery district in the brochures (www.eugenegallerydistrict.com).

It's a matter of working together, she says. "As great as we all are independently, there's a huge potential of attracting more people to do more art" with a concerted effort, Moser says.

"We all have to not just say there's a gallery district but market it, make sure people know about it. ... The product is there," she says.

At the new
Fenario Gallery
location during the
hanging of the opening

show last fall, Fenario's PR guy said, "Do I know what the gallery district is? Well, if it includes the spot where I'm standing, looking at Broadway and Willamette, I guess I do." And although Canaga's vision focuses mostly on the two-block area from the Jacobs Gallery to the White Lotus Gallery, he's generous enough to say that the district extends as far as the Downtown Initiative for the Visual Arts (DIVA) on the corner of Olive and Broadway and maybe even to the new New Zone Artists Collective a block west of DIVA.

Canaga wants more than a website; he wants signage. At various meetings of the Cultural Policy Review last fall, he brought up the idea of having signs pointing to areas of downtown including the gallery district. But he says he has been stymied in his quest for simple signs. “I would love to have pretty signs, old-fashioned lamps, maybe, with directions, for

instance, from the bike path saying 'Gallery District, 2 miles,'" Moser says.

Brent Rosskopf, Fenario's owner, would like to see the city of Eugene do

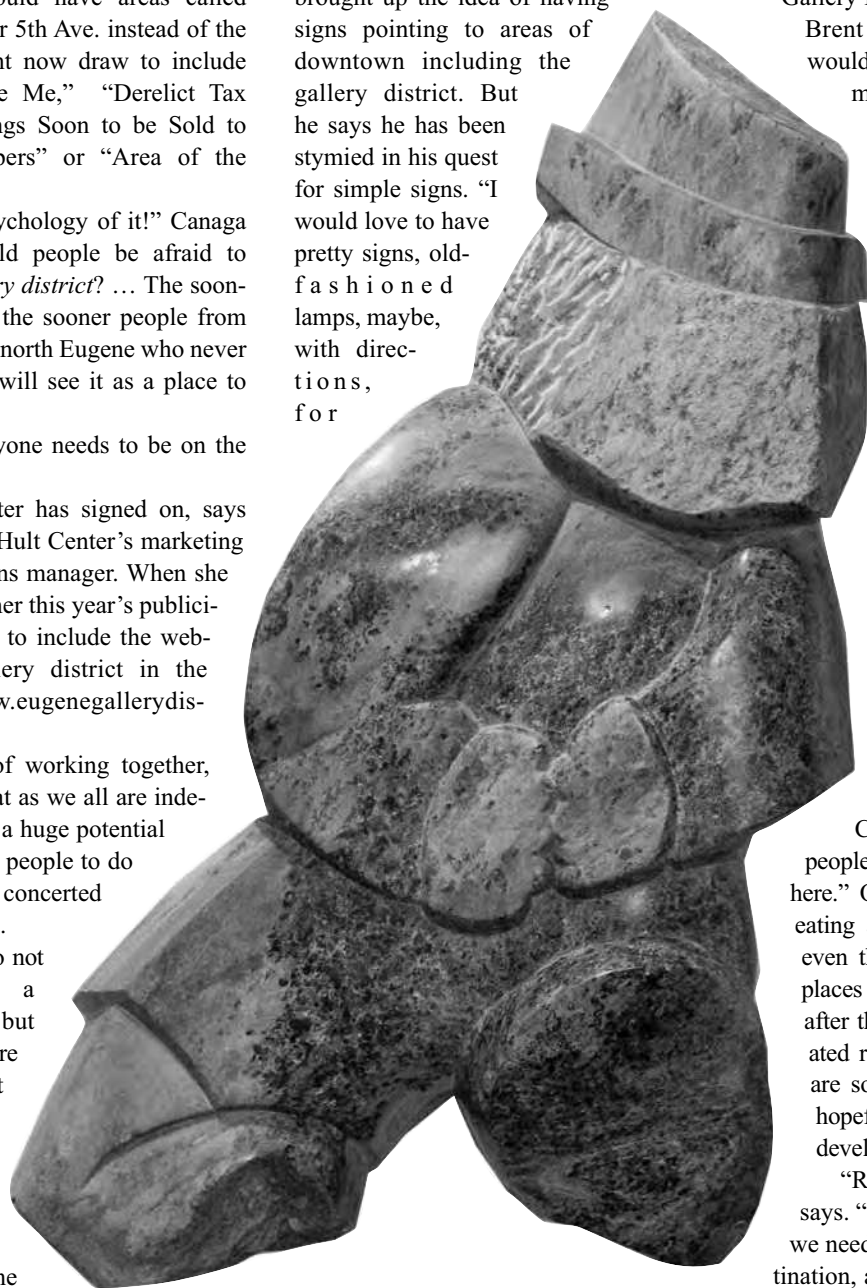
more to support the idea of a gallery district. "I don't get much help; it's more hindrance than help," he says, and he wonders, "Where *does* all the money go for those urban renewal projects?" He says the Connor-Woolley group wouldn't talk to him about renting the southwest corner of Willamette and Broadway, "with those big, beautiful windows," which would have extended the gallery district along the block leading to Poppi's and Actors Cabaret of Eugene. But he wants it to happen. "It would be a place where we can all enjoy these things, come together and be a community," he says.

What would a focus on a gallery district do for Eugene? Canaga lays out a vision in which people “know we are open, realize it’s all here.” Open galleries to wander in after eating and before going to the Hult or even the Leebrick over on Charnelton, places to have a glass of wine or a coffee after the show — unfortunately punctuated right now with what Canaga says are some unsavory elements. But he’s hopeful that a new city hall and other development might change that.

“Robert’s is a big vision,” Moser says. “We know the positive effects, but we need the infrastructure. We *are* a destination, and we need to be consistent; we need to just do it.” **EW**



In the gallery district now: *Bullseye* (top) by Robert Quigley at Fenario; *Placid Summer Day* (above) and *Skyvine* (below) by Jane Aukshunas at OpusSix



***Mystery Step* by David P. Miller at Karin Clarke**

GET IT ALL ONLINE