

## GODMOTHER OF PRINTMAKERS

Bob Keefer writes, “the godfather of printmaking here is Gordon Gilkey” (“Printmaking Explodes in Oregon,” 11/30). However, his article conveniently excludes LaVerne Krause, who I consider the godmother of Oregon printmaking.

Krause graduated from the University of Oregon art department in 1946, and lived in Portland after graduation, then returned to the UO to found the printmaking department.

Generations of artists, including me, marveled at her teaching skills and importance in championing young artists. In 1972 she gave my fellow printmaking students and me our first professional gallery experience in a summer showing at Portland’s prestigious Fountain Gallery, owned and directed by Arlene Schintzer (mother of noted print collector Jordan Schnitzer).

Mention “moody blues,” “lyrical abstraction” and “landscape” prints, and Krause always comes to mind. As the only woman on the UO visual arts faculty for much of her career, she often felt insecure when grouped with mostly male artists of her generation. Her work was conveniently excluded from the Smithsonian National Collection survey, *Art of the Pacific Northwest from 1930s to the Present*, exhibited in Washington, D.C., Seattle and Portland in 1974.

I consider Krause an important mentor not only for me but also for generations of Oregon-based artists and printmakers.

Much of her strength and success will be remembered as a teacher and also a prolific printmaker.

Krause inspired me to continue making prints after graduating in 1972, and these prints have been collected by the Portland Art Museum’s Gilkey Print Center as well as the Hallie Ford Museum, Willamette University, Salem.

Mike E. Walsh  
Eugene

## THE SOUL OF DIGITAL ART

As a relative newcomer to the art world, its artists, observers and critics, I was excited to read the *Weekly’s* cover story on Oregon printmaking. It was not long into the article, however, that a comment made by Eugene printmaker Tallmadge Doyle broke my focus and both surprised and saddened me.

In explaining a renewed interest in printmaking shown by many artists, Doyle made the declarative statement that “digital has no soul.”

I suppose I shouldn’t have been surprised, as the art world seems to have established a hierarchy of two-dimensional media evaluation, beginning with oil painting at the very top and then moving downward dismissively towards watercolor and mixed media, with textiles always taking the bottom rung of this ladder.

It’s unfortunate and unknowing when a non-artist dismisses digital art as soulless, but for an artist to do the same — that is, to elevate his or her process with a sweep-

ing negative generalization of another — is truly sad.

I rely heavily upon digital tools in my work, but I can assure Doyle that the hours and days I spend on each piece are no less imbued with my soul than are hers. She is certainly entitled to dislike any particular work of art, whatever the medium, but the statement condemning as “soulless” any medium she believes to be inferior to her own has no place in what should be an art world that embraces all new tools for self-expression.

Karen Lee  
Eugene

## NOTING GILKEY

Great article on “Printmaking Explodes in Oregon” (11/30). There have been so many excellent artists involved in this art form throughout the Northwest.

It was proper to note Gordon Gilkey as the vital force in the development of printmaking throughout the region and beyond. I knew him for years and he helped LaVerne Krause and Ken Paul set up a full-fledged printmaking program at the UO.

I visited Gilkey in the 1980s when he was a sort of permanent artist-in-residence at the Portland Art Museum School (now PNWCA) when it was attached directly to the Portland Art Museum. He used their printmaking presses and was always willing to talk with and help students and visitors. He was very interested in new technologies, including the computer, and was exploring digital printmaking in combina-

tion with traditional etching.

Gordon’s MFA was the first one awarded in “printmaking” in 1936 at University of Oregon and probably first in the country in printmaking as most had been in painting and sculpture prior to this time. It was not, however, the first MFA degree awarded at the UO.

The first MFA was awarded in 1926 at the University of Oregon. The art school was started in 1914. Most U.S. art schools did not formally award the MFA degree until the 1940s.

Kenneth O’Connell  
Former head of the  
UO Department of Art

## LIVING IN FEAR

I know the fear of raising a family of three children without insurance. That was my life for 12 years. My then-husband worked seasonally. I prayed there would be no bill too big I couldn’t pay off. It was before the Oregon Health Plan.

The only thing that popped up was my husband getting sick. Now he is sick and out of work. I knew not where to turn. My mother suggested the Veterans Administration. I didn’t know he qualified.

The VA was a lifesaver. Before the diagnosis of a very serious, life threatening illness, there was a surprise trip in an ambulance and then the bill. FireMed forgave our bill. I have maintained membership since. He returned to good health. It was three years until he could return to work.

Don’t let us return to that fearful time.

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