

NORTHWEST PALETTE

Bob Keefer's excellent review (Celebrating Two Lives in Paint," 12/14) brands Margaret Coe's and Mark Clarke's art practice with the DNA found in the regional art of the Northwest.

Mention "landscape" and "lyrical abstraction" in Eugene, and Northwest painters Margaret Coe and Mark Clarke come to mind. Their current retrospective survey, "Our Lives in Paint," is on exhibit at the University of Oregon's Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art through April 1, 2018. Their paintings and drawings have a universal appeal freighted with an omnivorous synthesis of impressionism and expressionism.

For many years Coe and Clarke have worked masterfully with landscape imagery. Neither can deny an impressionist device, structured ethereal surfaces with loosely painted areas juxtaposed to architectural structures; but their intent often suggest time and place, but also mood — hence expressionism.

Don't miss this important survey by two of Eugene's most respected painters.

Mike E. Walsh
Eugene

DIGITAL ART DEFENDED

In Bob Keefer's article a couple of weeks ago on printmaking (EW 11/30), the quote attributed to me about digital art having no soul was taken completely out of the original context and misrepresented my meaning. I would like to clear this up.

Within the context of printmaking, I was referring to the digital copies of original hand-pulled prints (or other works of art) that are ubiquitous these days, as compared to the actual handmade prints themselves. I have in the past used digital representation and tools within my own work and found the experience very satisfying.

There are contemporary artists using digital media whose work I follow and admire. I also believe contemporary printmaking using digital imagery in combination with traditional mediums can push the boundaries and expand the medium in new and exciting ways.

Karen Lee (Letter 12/7) is exactly right when she spoke of the unfair hierarchy of mediums within two-dimensional works of art. This is clearly an unfortunate consequence of both the traditions and the business of art.

I believe the true test of art is in how effective it is in encouraging us to feel, think, and dream — not what medium or techniques are used to create it.

Tallmadge Doyle
Eugene

SLIPPERY SLOPE

The Eugene city government prides itself with the rather dubious slogan, "World's Greatest City of the Arts and Outdoors."

For the Eugene Airport, an entryway into the city, to alter public artwork based upon the moralism of its managers is a sign of a growing cultural decadence in the community.

For the city manager to announce that to err toward caution is the way to proceed with the shaming and judgment of Garrison Keillor is to promote a philistine environment where censorship of art begins. When the artists are silenced in such a moral climate of witch-hunting the community as a whole will suffer. But we can take solace that art is long and city governments are short.

Christopher Guilfoil
Eugene

Editor's Note: The slogan became merely "a great city for art and outdoors" in 2010.

GIVE YOUR TIME!

Time is money. In the last issue, Give Guide (12/21), EW focused on where to expend your hard-earned dollars to do the most good locally, as well as listed some volunteer opportunities. I commend all of the organizations that are doing great work stretching dollars. As the New Year approaches, consider donating your time throughout the year.

If your New Year's Resolution is to do more good for the community (what a great resolution!) you could start strong in January by volunteering for the annual Point in Time Homeless Street Count. The count takes place January 31, 2018, and volunteers are needed to survey individuals experiencing homelessness.

Results from the Point in Time (aka PIT) Count are utilized to leverage funding and bring more dollars into our commu-

nity to help people stabilize their lives and move out of homelessness. Donating your time will help bring in money to many organizations that were on your Give Guide list and is an easy, safe way to learn about homelessness in our community.

To volunteer go to lanecounty.org/homelesscount.

Alex Dreher
Eugene

DEFAZIO AIDS VETS

Congressman Peter DeFazio greatly assisted me and solved the problem of high rent when my vet friend moved into the VA home at Lebanon a few months ago.

Yes, Congressman DeFazio is a great supporter of all veterans issues!

Please, Oregon voters, continue to support him — he could use your vote!

Stace Webb
Eugene

LEFT AGENDA

It is unfortunate and misleading for Jerry Ritter (Letters 12/21) to characterize Doug Jones as having a "far left agenda." Jones received enough Republican support in his very conservative state to eke out a narrow victory in his recent Senate race in Alabama.

In fact, Jones is a moderate Democrat. Anyone who actually followed the race in Alabama knows this to be true. I don't know if Ritter intends to color your thoughts with bogus rhetoric, or if it is that he has simply lost touch with reality. In ei-

DESIGN MATTERS BY JERRY DIETHELM

Land Swap

ASK EUGENE SKINNER?

The small in statue but large in stature bronzed man who sits on the log outside the Eugene Public Library was a generous man. He and pioneer partner, Charnelton Mulligan, each donated 40 acres of land to be used to build our county seat.

Their legal legacy was the requirement that four acres of that land be reserved as a permanent public square with a county courthouse at its center. Lane County Commissioners in response set aside a 400 ft. by 400 ft. square of land, half taken from each donation, to create our downtown public square.

Strictly speaking, 400 by 400 wasn't quite four acres, but Eugene Skinner was a reasonable man, reasonable as well as generous, and that reasonableness with respect to the evolution of our central downtown square has been put to the test many times over in the years since its origins in 1854.

Now, 163 years later, it is before us again as we contemplate swapping city and county land to build a new city hall and a new and much larger county courthouse.

But, you might wonder, how did our town square turn into the Park Blocks, and what happened to the first courthouse that was duly built at its center in 1855?

Eugene Skinner, who died in 1864, didn't live to see the east-west extension of 8th Avenue and the north-south extension of Oak Street that cut through his square, dividing it into four public blocks, and that moved its central courthouse off to one side. There was never any question that the relocated courthouse remained central to the county's business. It was just no longer at the geographic center of the square. And so the new configuration remained unchanged until 1898 when the courthouse was once more enlarged and rebuilt. A suit challenging the quartering of Skinner's original square and the requirement of a centrally located courthouse was belatedly raised at this rebuilding but defeated in court in 1899.

The 1898 Lane County Courthouse was a grand and stately brick building and a significant piece of our architectural history that is still sorely missed, except perhaps by the people who could no longer fit the county's business into it. It was torn down and replaced to the north just outside the square in 1959. And at the same time the northwest Park Block was turned into what we now refer to as the "butterfly" parking garage because of its uplifted ends.

It helps to comprehend how much time and change has taken place downtown since the original Skinner-Mulligan land donation if we can imagine asking Eugene Skinner if he approved of using his park block as a parking garage. And hear Skinner reply, "What's a parking garage?" Or ask whether he'd prefer our building a new nine-story courthouse that covered the butterfly block or getting this park block restored by building on the whole city hall block that is now available next door? And get this response, "What's a nine-

story building?"

For some years now, it's been Harris Hall that has become the nerve center of our county seat. The Harris Hall entrance to the Public Service Building, which still sits on the original square, connects to the off-square courthouse to the north and until recently connected via Otto Poticha's Blue Bridge across Pearl Street to the City Hall.

If we build the new courthouse on the old City Hall block, Harris Hall would then connect to an off-square courthouse to the east rather than to the north. The site for a new City Hall at the north end of the butterfly garage was never a part of the Skinner Square. The county had to reacquire a half block of property north of the square to stretch the parking garage to 7th Avenue.

There have been so many changes to the original Skinner project, from the dicing of the square into blocks, to the migration off-square of the courthouse, to the modern size and conception of a courthouse and a county seat, that it makes one wonder why we are — after a year of lawyering — still doing the land swap two-step. Such hand-wringing lends itself too easily to such bad lawyer jokes as: What is the difference between poor corporate lawyers and rich corporate lawyers? And the answer:

Poor corporate lawyers drag these matters out for years, whereas rich corporate lawyers drag them out forever.

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