

Astoria Studio Tour

Visit 35 artists in 23 studios throughout Astoria July 25 and 26

Now in its fifth year, the Astoria Studio Tour promises a fuller experience of art and art-in-the-making than ever before. Thirty-five artists will show their work, and many their process, in 23 studios from Alderbrook to the distant reaches of Lewis and Clark Road.

The tour includes some of the best-known Astoria artists, such as Noel Thomas, Darren Orange, Jill McVarish, Robert Paulmenn and Charles Schweigert, as well as others less familiar but well worth a visit. You'll see watercolor, oils, acrylics, pastels, mixed-media, photography, mono-type prints, lino-block prints, mosaic, paper collage, sculpture, fiber art, handmade paper lamps, book binding, and boxes. In other words, about anything that one can turn into art.

On tours like this there is a natural tendency for visitors to gravitate to the better-known artists and to the closest studios, those nearest downtown. While this is understandable, it limits the aesthetic experience. You'll miss some fine work if you limit your tour to the downtown area.

A case in point is Hiih (pronounced "hi hi") Lights, the studio where husband-and-wife team Kestrel Gates and Lâm Quàng create their beautiful lamps and lighting installations for homes and commercial locations. To find them you'll have to follow Lewis and Clark road 6.1 miles from Miles Crossing (making sure that you take the jog to the right across

the river). There you'll find an old Craftsman home, a sign that advertises eggs for sale, and a barn. The barn is the studio. The family moved here from Portland over two years ago because, Gates says, "We wanted to be in the country for the kids, and we love gardening and animals."

"We love being out here," Quàng agrees. "We can see the stars." He also points out that they can now make more and larger pieces than they could in their old 200-square-foot studio.

It is the first year on the tour for Hiih Lights, as it is for Shigemi Tajiri who moved here from Tokyo about the same time that Gates and Quàng moved from Portland. As a teenager in South America, inspired by Alex Raymond ("Rip Kirby" and "Flash Gordon"), he practiced cartooning. "Then I went to Japan for university and work" — as an advertising representative for international magazines — "and I didn't have time to draw or paint until after retirement."

He and his wife, Katsuko, moved to a house at the top of the south slope, where the walls of his atelier are covered with pen and ink drawings (often using only dots) of John Wayne, Batman, and horses, as well as caricatures ("I really like caricatures."). A man of many talents, Tajiri also shows finely carved and painted birds and pyrographs (wood burnings, which he finds similar to pen and ink).

Charles Schweigert, one of the founding organizers of the tour, notes that last year was a "watershed" one for the tour, with much stronger traffic to the studios than in previous years. Also, he says, "The art is affordable, and many of the artists are willing to work with a buyer for a payment plan or other arrangement to put that must-have piece of art within reach."

The evolution of the tour into what it is today is in part due to sponsorship, this year and last, by Co-

lumbia Memorial hospital, and this year by Astoria Visual Artists, which provided funding from the city of Astoria Arts and Cultural Program to Promote Tourism.

The Astoria Studio Tour takes place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on both Saturday, July 25, and Sunday, July 26. Pick up a map at a local merchant or download one at astoriaartists.org. While there you can also click on "Artist Pages" to see examples of work by many of the participating artists. Once you've planned your tour you'll find signs directing you to the studios.



Photo by Dwight Caswell

Husband-and-wife team Lâm Quàng, left, and Kestrel Gates create lamps and lighting installations for homes and commercial locations in their Astoria studio.

Pick up a map

Find maps at local merchants or download one at astoriaartists.org



Submitted photo by Nick Myatt

Shigemi Tajiri will show a mix of pen and ink drawings, wood burnings, and carved and painted birds during the Astoria Studio Tour.



Submitted photo

Sculptor Isabelle Johnston-Haist has been a member of the Pacific North West Sculptors for several years and now serves on the group's board as its secretary

the arts

VISUAL ARTS • LITERATURE • THEATER • MUSIC & MORE

Story by DWIGHT CASWELL