

A PASSION FOR WATER

ASTORIA ARTISTS SALLY LACKAFF AND ROGER HAYES OPEN THE JOINT SHOW 'CLATSOP COUNTY WATERS' AT IMOGEN GALLERY

I look down the hill to the house. It is of a kind not uncommon in Astoria, a small, simple craftsman home built to house cannery workers over a century ago. There is no garage or driveway. Instead, I take a winding path down from the street to the front door. Sally Lackaff welcomes me into the homey home that she shares with her husband, Roger Hayes. It is a congenial blend of living and working space warmed by a gas heater. I am introduced to a cat named Stella, whose job seems to be to quietly oversee everything.

Hayes is kneeling on the floor, gluing his acrylic-on-paper paintings on canvas, preparatory to framing them for an exhibit called "Clatsop County Waters" that he and Lackaff will have this month at Imogen Gallery in Astoria.

"It's nice, if you're an artist, to live in a funky house," says Lackaff.

Hayes studied lithography at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit from 1978 to 1981. In the '80s he became associated with neo-expressionism and then interested in outsider art, and his work was exhibited in both Europe (including a show with Nick Knapton) and the United States.

By the late '80s, Hayes had "followed the trail," as he says, to Portland and then to Astoria. "I've always felt divided about where I lived, but half my life I've been planted here," he says. Today he is, "drawing newer and old stuff. I have a fascination with pop art, but I'm always going to be an expressionist."

Lackaff's father, Frank, was a Cannon Beach artist in the 1960s. She moved to Astoria as a way of trying things on her own, although she has had multiple shows in Cannon Beach. "I've never had any formal training," she says, "I've just morphed into where I am. Which is a watercolorist and mixed-media fabric artist who also illustrates children's books, and today relies on commissions more than gallery shows.

In 2016 Lackaff and Hayes will have been together for 20 years, and they have

"Clatsop County Waters" opens during the next Astoria Second Saturday Art Walk, held from 5 to 8 p.m. Jan. 9. The show runs for one month at Imogen Gallery, located at 240 11th St.



"Svensen Island and Crows" by Sally Lackaff.

lived half of that time in their Astoria home. This is only their second two-person show together, and for inspiration they have turned to the many forms water takes in Clatsop County, especially the Columbia and its estuary. Each, of course, has approached the theme differently.

"For me, almost all of my work is tied up with nature," Lackaff explains. "There's a particular bird and body of water for each picture." Her work in the Imogen show includes both watercolors and embroidery mounted in handmade frames. "Embroidery is like abstract art," she says.

Hayes says his work is, "about the Columbia River and the light on the river. The rhythms of the water, trying to keep my mind still enough to see the water as it is, using light and shadow to capture the rhythms of the water. It's complicated. You could spend your whole life trying to figure out how to do it right."

"You could spend your whole life watching it," says Sally.

"I'm giving a kind of hint of what it looks like," Roger replies.

"Every one of your paintings captures a portion of what you're striving for," she tells him.

"We're celebrating the water we have here," says Roger. "It's inexhaustible, the same simple topic you go back to again. It becomes a theme."

I photograph their work, we talk, and I



Photo by Dwight Caswell

"River No. 1" by Roger Hayes.



Photo by Dwight Caswell

Astoria artist Roger Hayes, left, works to glue an acrylic-on-paper painting onto a canvas as his wife, artist Sally Lackaff, and pet cat, Stella, look on.

take my leave. As I walk up the trail to the street, I imagine that I hear their conversation continue. About water, about the river, about art.



Submitted photo

"Puddle Water: Killdeer at the Port of Astoria" detail by Sally Lackaff.

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Story by DWIGHT CASWELL