

Artists at work

The 2016 Astoria Open Studio Tour invites the public to meet artists and see demonstrations all around Astoria July 30 and 31

Story and photos By
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Have you ever wondered what happens between the artist's idea and the gallery's painting or print? From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. this Saturday and Sunday, July 30 and 31, almost 50 local artists will invite you into their studios to meet them, see their work, and watch live demonstrations. And it's all free and a lot of fun.

The local arts community is thriving as never before, and this tour is proof of that. The variety and quality of work on display is impressive. There will be long-established Astoria artists, like Darren Orange, Gin Laughery, David Lee Myers and Noel Thomas, as well as relatively recent arrivals on the scene, like Robert Paulmenn and Lam Quang's HiiH Lights. You'll also find other accomplished artists who are new arrivals to Astoria.

One of the newcomers to the tour is David McMacken, whose 10th Street studio, Ratz and Company, is in its third year. His exceptional illustrative work is unique in the area, and his career as an illustrator goes back over half a century. His agents peddle his talents, literally, from Chicago to Shanghai, and it is McMacken's experience that, "Artists need to learn to be businessmen, or you're not a professional artist."

On display in McMacken's studio are both paintings and archival prints of his work, which include advertising illustrations, paintings of Astoria and the coast ("Pilot Boat Arrow No. 2," "Cape Foulweather"), rock 'n' roll art (He's got a thing for Frank Zappa, but who doesn't?), and stuff that's just plain weird. Among the latter are "Attack of the Killer Chihuahua" and various movie monsters obliterating New York and San Francisco. You can't ask for a more heterogeneous oeuvre than that.

Normandie Hand's studio and gallery is located in Suite A at 1054

Exchange St. The studio is new, but her work has long been familiar to art aficionados on both sides of the river. "Printmaking is the basis of my work," she says, "and sometimes I do mixed-media on top of the prints." The media she uses include beeswax, colored pencil, crayons, pens, sumi and acrylic inks, and collage.

Hand has a background in marketing but finds that marketing her work is a distraction from the creative process. She has taken a break from the sales end of things to create a body of work for her next gallery show.

"I'm very inwardly focused when I'm creating art," Hand says. "It's an addiction, a good and positive one." While working on her prints she listens to Books on Tape because, "It engages the exacting part of my mind, which frees me up to be creative."

Hand's work can be representational (lots of dogs on paper and two dogs in the studio) or abstract. For the open studio she will be joined by three other well-known local artists, printmakers Kirsten Horning and Gin Laughery, and painter Linden. That's a powerful combination, and makes this studio a must-see.

Another artist not to be missed is Renee Rowe. Her studio is located in the Astoria Art Loft at 106 Third St., where nine artists are participating in the studio tour. Rowe is new to Astoria but not to art. She has managed and owned art galleries, and she moved here when she decided to concentrate on her own artwork. "I absolutely love the quirky nature of the town, and that it's forward looking and has a past it connects with," she says. Rowe also likes being a part of an arts community, "being with serious-minded people who are committed to art and doing meaningful art."

Rowe divides her work into "impressionist art and crazy art." Her impressionist work is primarily of the local landscape. "I'm from

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Printmaker and multi-media artist Normandie Hand transfers ink to paper.



Artist David McMacken will showcase his illustrative work, including paintings and prints, at his studio in downtown Astoria.

the desert," she says, "and I love the green and the water and the clouds. They thrill me." Her "crazy art" involves dripping and throwing house paint as well as "metal, varnish, old paper, you name it. I just play."

These three studios represent 14 artists, and the whole of the Astoria Open Studio Tour is just as interesting, exceptional and fun. Check out the map of studio locations as well as samples of each artist's work on Page 12. Plan your time, or get into the spirit of the thing. Park somewhere in Astoria, start walking to the nearest numbered location, and surprise yourself with art.



Renee Rowe, one of the artists at Astoria Art Loft, works on an impressionistic painting.