

# THE ARTS

Visual arts, literature,  
theater, music & more

## LOOKING FOR AUTHENTICITY

### Betsy Millard tasked with jurying AVA's 'My Secret Astoria' exhibition

By JONATHAN WILLIAMS  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

**F**rom the Astoria Column to shops downtown and the natural environment, life on the Columbia River provides much material for artists to explore.

But what are places or things that are special to individual artists?

This is the subject of “My Secret Astoria,” an Astoria Visual Arts member exhibit opening on Saturday, Jan. 12, at the RiverSea Gallery during the Second Saturday Art Walk from 5 to 8 p.m. The show will be on view through Tuesday, Feb. 5.

It’s also what Betsy Millard has been tasked with jurying.

“My job is to try to sort of take all these bits and make some sort of sense out of them,” Millard said about selecting works for the show submitted by AVA members. The AVA is a nonprofit that supports arts and culture in Astoria.

Millard is the executive director of the Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum in Ilwaco, Wash., and was previously curator at the St. Louis Art Museum and director of the Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis.

Millard is hoping to see a couple dozen works. “I will fill the space as much as I can. I love creating dialogue between pieces,” she said.

#### Personal wonderment

Millard looks for authenticity in the artist’s work. She said she’s looking for works that “make Astoria, Astoria.”

Artists were invited to submit works that “depict a place or memory of special significance to convey their per-



Colin Murphey

#### IF YOU GO

**Astoria Visual Arts’  
‘My Secret Astoria’ exhibition**

**When:** Opens 5 to 8 p.m. Jan. 12 during Astoria Second Saturday Art Walk, on view through Feb. 5.

**Where:** RiverSea Gallery, 1160 Commercial St., Astoria, Ore.

sonal experience of Astoria,” according to Jeannine Grafton, owner of RiverSea Gallery.

Grafton did a previous “My Secret Astoria” show more than 10 years ago at

**Betsy Millard, executive director of the Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum in Ilwaco, looks over a model train display at the museum.**

the gallery and suggested the AVA do it again.

She said in the original show she “wanted to explore all the different aspects of Astoria that were meaningful in a private way to local residents, beyond the obvious tourist attractions and the sort of experience you might have on a quick trip or a drive-by of the town.”

The works will be for sale; 50 percent of the proceeds will go to the artist, the other half will go to the River-

Sea Gallery, which will give 10 percent to AVA’s Miss Bea Johnson Fund For Young Artists. The Fund provides community-based learning opportunities for students at Astoria and Knappa High Schools interested in visual art.

AVA Executive Director Annie Eskelein said the fun part of group shows is that each artist lends their own experience to the theme. “It’s everybody’s own personal wonderment,” she said.

Continued on Page 17