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"This is something of course, that none of us living have gone through," Grafton said. "It's so fast-evolving, it's the most difficult thing that I've ever tried to squirm or plan my way through. We're adapting as the situation changes."

RiverSea and others are seeing decreased sales.

"Our business is experiencing a giant drop-off, even though we have the ability to sell online," Grafton said. "People are holding onto their resources because they don't know when they're going to need their few thousand dollars."

In Gearhart, Trail's End Art Association is facing a 10% decrease in sales each month the gallery is closed, said association president Kitty Paino.

"Our income is based on three things: commissions, membership and classes. We've sustained ourselves for 70 years doing these things. Now, we've lost two of them," Paino said. "We can sustain ourselves for a handful of months but will need to be creative if this lasts longer."

The association closed in early March after one of the first government warnings against group gatherings. The organization closed early because most of its members are over age 60 and are at higher risk of coronavirus, Paino said.

In Ilwaco, the closure has impacted artists like Don Nisbett, who runs his shop with his wife Jenna and son Joe.

"This affects all of our family," said Jenna Nisbett. "We're making about a tenth of what we'd normally be making."

Lasting impressions

While the galleries have been closed, some artists have found inspiration in current events. Don Nisbett has painted a series featuring crabs with timely messages like, "don't be crabby, wash your hands." Some images include a crab holding a roll of toilet paper and another with a bar of soap.

Jenna Nisbett is using some of her extra free time to update the gallery's website.

"We're trying not to panic," she said. "We're trying to come up with creative solutions and still do some light-hearted art in light of all the tragedy."

Trail's End artists have also been inspired. The group's artists regularly are connecting online through the association's website and Facebook page.

"My paintings have exploded. I don't know what it is," Paino said. "For older people, I'm 70, we're trying to find a place of connection and acceptance in a world that's really different because we're staying home."

At RiverSea, which features about 200 artists, Grafton and her staff have also been



Kitty Paino's 'Stranded' is her most recent creation.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The RiverSea gallery also features ceramic pieces by local artists.

using the extra time to get creative.

"Not all of them make their income entirely by art but a lot of them do and they're not able to do that now," Grafton said. "This is a key time of year for us too, as spring is when sales usually pick up."

Grafton's staff is working to create virtual gallery tours for possible buyers. They're also using social media more often to showcase the gallery's collection.

"We're doing whatever we can to keep us going," Grafton said. "We have been making some sales but it's a trickle of what we had been getting."

Looking forward

For anyone interested in art, the three owners suggested following different galleries on social media and purchasing art when possible.

"It meant a lot when recently some customers on Facebook shared images of Don's," Jenna Nisbett said. "The sharing of kind words makes a difference. Those small things matter, and make us feel like we're not alone and that we can continue to live the dream as artists."

The owners hope to reopen soon so they can continue showcasing local artists' creations. While the future is uncertain for the galleries, the owners look forward to the creations that will be made during coronavirus-related closures.

"One little silver lining is that whenever you live through historic times like now, one outcome is that some great art comes out," Grafton said. "A lot of artists I know are hunkering down and creating. It's going to be a flowering at the end but we all have to get through this together."



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

RiverSea Gallery features many pieces from artists around the Pacific Northwest.



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