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Artist's Gallery is the Street



Former homeless woman paints from experience

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Kate Ferris, a former art teacher who spent eight months on the streets after a life spiral of downturns left her homeless, displays and sells her folk art to a market unlike any other gallery in Portland.

Layered in oversized sweatshirts and blue jeans, the dark-haired wife and mother of four holds up a colorfully painted cardboard sign to cars parked at a red-light freeway off ramp. Her blue-grey eyes wink as passengers drive by.

When a former life of comfort fell through, Ferris became witness to the agonies of homelessness. For survival, she began sketching the most beautiful things she could think of.

The artwork on Ferris's canvas, a slab of cardboard to represent the impermanence of materiality, a subject she knows firsthand, reflects

Kate Ferris stands on the corner of a freeway off ramp in the Hollywood District of northeast Portland where she has sold over 160 paintings to car passengers.

PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

what she knows best, being a female and living outside.

Her favorite piece details a striking mulatto woman dressed in a gown of tree bark and embellished by other patterns of nature. As one of many underrepresented female artists, she paints to fill a void.

Born and raised in Portland, Ferris attended a private grade school in

owned a print shop in Milwaukie for 10 years, and taught on and off at 8th grade art programs. After she sold the print shop, Ferris opened a vintage store in Sellwood where she designed dresses. She bought a house, and met her new husband, Jamie, a musician.

When she moved her vintage clothes shop Epoch to Hawthorne,

It was embarrassing. That's how I ended up doing this. It was so abrupt.

— KATE FERRIS

north Portland before her family moved to the country and she later studied at Hillsboro High School. Young Kate was particularly interested in art, especially by visiting art teachers.

When she had four kids of her own, she enrolled in college art classes to brush up her skills and began teaching art in schools for three years. Following a divorce, Ferris worked for much of her kids' lives as a self-employed, single-parent.

She did freelance production,

Ferris began to feel the weight of running an independent business. In attempts to ease the stress, she opened shop later and for fewer hours. Then the bad news arrived. Her mother was to become bed-bound with Parkinson's disease.

Unwilling to let her mother be taken to a nursing home, Ferris embraced the full-time caretaker position for the next two and a half years. As the brain disorder stole her mother's memory and cognition,

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Battling High Costs of Cooler Days

Home weatherization and other tips offered

BY MINDY COOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

With winter just around the corner, local businesses and organizations are dedicated to helping both homeowners and renters face their rising energy costs through affordable products and sustainable weatherization practices.

For over 33-years, Community Energy Project, Inc., based out of



northeast Portland, has empowered local residents to maintain a more energy efficient, healthier, and more livable home and natural environment.

By educating individuals on how to control their utility costs, while simultaneously conserving natural resources, the non-profit lives its belief that people are the experts of their own experience.

"What we have are people with

really low incomes and the price of energy keeps going up," said Sherrie Smith, the energy project's outreach and marketing supervisor.

Created during the energy crisis during the Carter Administration, the organization has helped countless individuals from all walks of life through their free weatherization workshops, where residents can

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Sam Pardue shows how residents can reduce their high energy costs during the winter in an affordable and sustainable way with his thermal window insert known as the Indow Window. Pardue is the chief executive officer and founder of the north Portland business.

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