

## INDIAN ART GALLERY CHANGES HANDS

Jim Jackson will take over for Lillian Pitt, grand opening scheduled for October 25.

By Ron Karten

The "winds" of change and "recent health issues" have brought new ownership to the Lillian Pitt Studio/Gallery on trendy Alberta Street in north Portland. Pitt, a celebrated Warm Springs-Wasco-Wishxam artist, whose work is derived from artifacts and designs of the ancient Columbia River Indians, turned over ownership October 1 this year to Jim and Teresa Jackson of Corbett. Pitt has presented and sold her work and the work of many other Indian and non-Indian artists in this gallery for nearly three years.

Jim Jackson, a Klamath/Modoc sculptor, has shown his work at art shows across the country and out of his home for the twenty years he has been at it, and all the while, Pitt has "been a true mentor" to him, according to his wife, Teresa, who will manage and co-own the gallery.

"That's why this is so much more special," Teresa Jackson said.

The transfer process was only a month in coming, according to Jackson. The couple had for years considered opening a gallery of their own. "The opportunity came into our hands and it seemed like such a right thing to do," she said. "We're nervous but excited."

The location could not be better. In the last few years, Alberta Street has become a hot location with respected galleries, restaurants and shops of all kinds. Driving through the neighborhood, the street is a great colorful surprise. It was just coming on when Pitt moved in. "She brought a lot of respect to the area," Jackson said.

The gallery itself will continue to show Pitt's eclectic range of artwork — from jewelry to Pendleton blankets woven with her designs. In addition, according to Jackson, they will show a number of other Native artists from across the country, and non-Native artists as well.

"The artists coming in are friends of ours that Jim has gotten to know over the last 20 years. We collect their art and have it in our home. Now, he will be bringing back artwork to sell instead of collect." Prime among those, Jackson said, will be Hopi Katsina (pronounced Kachina) dolls.

At a recent meeting of the Affiliated Tribes of NW Indians, Pitt also said that the selling part of being an artist has always been most difficult for her.

"This change," she wrote in a letter to those

who have supported her work over the years, "will allow me much needed time to focus on the things that are most important to me; my art making and the need to nurture and take care of myself."

The grand opening for the new owners is October 25, 5-9 p.m., at 1468 N.E. Alberta in Portland.



1468 N.E. Alberta, Portland, Oregon

Photo by Ron Karten

### LILLIAN PITT — Teaching history and culture through art.



Photos courtesy of Lillian Pitt

Lillian Pitt, a Warm Springs-Wasco-Wishxam sculptor and muralist, is best known for her ceramic masks and wearable art. No matter what she does, however, teaching seems to be at the bottom of it.

A recent exhibit at her art gallery in Portland — "Three Centuries of Trade Beads from Czechoslovakia, Italy, China, and Africa" — includes many examples which were traded to and among the Columbia River People native to the area for 10,000 years.

New commissions have enabled Pitt to design benches and railings and artwork for the upcoming Portland stop at the Interstate station of

Tri-Met. For another installation, down the block in the Ainsworth green space at Interstate, in front of the Ockley-Green Middle School, she has worked in conjunction with students there and nature poet Gail Trembly, so that her art will accompany poems by the middle school kids.

For the Oregon Convention Center, she is designing 26 bronze plaques in what will be the largest collection of a Native American's artwork for a public space in the city.

On October 24, Pitt will exhibit her new designs for one night only with top jeweler Marty Zell at 715 S.W. Morrison Street in Portland.

Her former gallery still offers her masks, prints,



LILLIAN PITT

and sculptures, her designs on jewelry and Pendleton blankets, as well as the works of other important artists in the field of Indian art.

She said this about her art:

"I use the ancient stories of my ancestors as a basis for the imagery I create. By doing this I maintain the memory of an ancient culture and keep the beliefs of my people alive. We have forgotten how to live in harmony with nature. Accessing this vast reservoir of traditional information and translating it into contemporary terms jogs our memories and provides points of reference to achieving balance within ourselves, our community and the world. My ancestors have a 10,000-year history in the Columbia River Gorge. Much of my work has to do with the preservation and care of the environment along this ancient waterway."

Her 1993 ceramic mask with beadwork is called, "She Who Watches." Taken from a pictograph found along the Columbia River, "She Who Watches" is an important figure among Columbia River legends. The mask represents a "woman chief (who) taught her people how to live well. Because she wanted to watch over her people forever, Coyote changed her into rock. Under her watchful gaze, we remember her as the last woman chief of the Columbia River people."

### JIM JACKSON — "Teaching about where I come from."

Jim Jackson, a Klamath/Modoc sculptor spends a good part of his time these days on the road to shows. His work is seen across the United States and in Europe, and depending on the show, he could be carrying around almost 20 of his larger pieces — and some are eight feet tall — and probably twice that many smaller pieces.

His work is both in bronze and ceramics, and the people who are interested in his work also are interested in him and his background. "A lot of people aren't educated about Indians at all. The teaching process is telling them where I come from, the different Tribes and where they are, and the different languages."

He also teaches art directly through Title IX

programs in the area. He teaches grade school children on up through high school. "It's interesting to see some of the kids get interested in art," he said. "They're so teachable when they're young."

Jackson, a winner of the Portland Metropolitan Arts Commission's One Man Show award and the first place award in sculpture at the Dallas, Texas American Indian Art Invitational, doesn't see his work changing so much as himself. He thinks he may be growing in patience. "When I started, I was impatient for



JIM JACKSON

Photo by Ron Karten

the finished product. Now I find myself taking more time to do a piece."

In fact, he has six bronzes that have been in various stages for up to six years. "All eventually get done," he said, but not always as originally envisioned. "Sometimes I cut them apart and put pieces from different works together, so my ideas get put together in different ways."