ARTIST *from page 1A*

"Kyle lives in this cabin across the lake, immersed in nature, and nature grows on top of it and absorbs things until it becomes something new again," Szalewski said. "All of his work, if you really look at it, is organic. To him, nature is abundant, so everything in it is worthwhile and nothing is garbage."

There, Lind connects to the natural world, practices yoga and meditation and works on his art.

"Inspiration can't be any better than that. There are a lot of natural forms in my work," he said, including an "element of beings" that show the energy swirling around things like his cabin, landscapes and people.

One of the highlights of the retrospective for Szalewski is a piece called "Spirit Man," an assemblage made from found natural and manufactured materials. The figure normally resides in the cabin with Lind under special lighting.

"With 'Spirit Man,' his original intent was to be an observer or witness to it all," Szalewski said. "He feels like a presence all on his own."

She initially met Lind 30 years ago when Mindpower Gallery showed the artist's work for the first time. At the time, Lind was working on his Home Series of tiny painted houses.

"I was young, and abstract art was not something I was overly fond of. I just didn't have a lot of knowledge about it," Szalewski said. "It wasn't until I actually went up in the air in a plane that I went, 'Ah! I get it!'"

After working with Lind for so long, she is now able to both understand his art and display it to advantage. Still, the two had to do a little work to reach the accord.

According to Szalewski, Lind visited the gallery after his first show with a piece called "Rio."

"It is really realistic in the middle, and then the fantasy animals take off into the style of the spirit world that he has," she said. "I was quite taken with it … and asked why he brought it to me. Kyle looked right at me and goes, 'It's because you think I can't draw.' So we had our moment and connected. Ever since then, we have a fun relationship."

Later, Lind said the gallery is a great place to hold a show, and the Szalewski sisters "know an awfully lot about me and my work."

After agreeing to work together on the retrospective, the artist brought his art to Reedsport in a semi-truck-sized U-Haul. Luckily for Szalewski, it wasn't crammed full, but she was still surprised to see the amount of work he was able to bring.

She is using all of her skills as a gallerist and curator, as well as their 30-year rapport, to curate Lind's collection to fit within the gallery's walls.

"He's going to have room after room in the gallery. We're talking five major rooms in here, as well as the window displays," she said. "Never before have we done this massive of a show. This is pretty daunting."

It took three days just to unwrap the art pieces, one week to prep each piece for display and another week to hang the show.

For Szalewski, it was a "monumental task of trying to sort according to styles and era" for an artist whose work is as diverse as the more than 200 self-portraits Lind has made in his life. One room of the gallery will be dedicated solely to these portraits.

Szalewski is also limited by the space of the gallery compared to the size of the works. One piece is eight feet by 13 feet, and several other large canvas rolls nearly match it in size.

"That's what makes it challenging: I only have certain walls to hang certain pieces. Then I still have to create a room around that," she said.

Szalewski described a gallerist's job as selecting and hanging works that are then presented to visitors to the space. "We're that go-between for the artist. We have to try and introduce the public that has no information and get them to understand this person. And you do that in how you curate a show and how you present it."

In order to display an artist, Szalewski said she needs a minimum of five pieces, or "enough to show consistency and style."

"It's like, how do you say hello to somebody in one sentence and know that person?" she asked. "With this show, I can say, 'This is Kyle. He is a very unique artist who in his life has been able to sort of shelter away and very quietly be who he is.'"

As a curator, one of her jobs is to go into a studio and look through all of an artist's works. She will then be able to sort the main body of work from the "one-hit wonders" that artists often create. Those explorative pieces often fold back into and influence the main body of work.

"Look at any of these pieces, and you can definitely see Kyle in there," Szalewski added.

Thirty years ago, the first show with Lind almost didn't work because his expectations differed from Szalewski's. As a young curator, she stuck to her instincts to best showcase his work.

"I had to explain my vision for how this was going to work. He stopped, looked at me and said, 'Oh, I get it. You're trying to sell the work,'" she noted. "I present the work like one piece that you can take away, whereas he's trying to do a show, the whole entire thing. … In his mind, this is an experience, not something that you're marketing to people. This is living, breathing art."

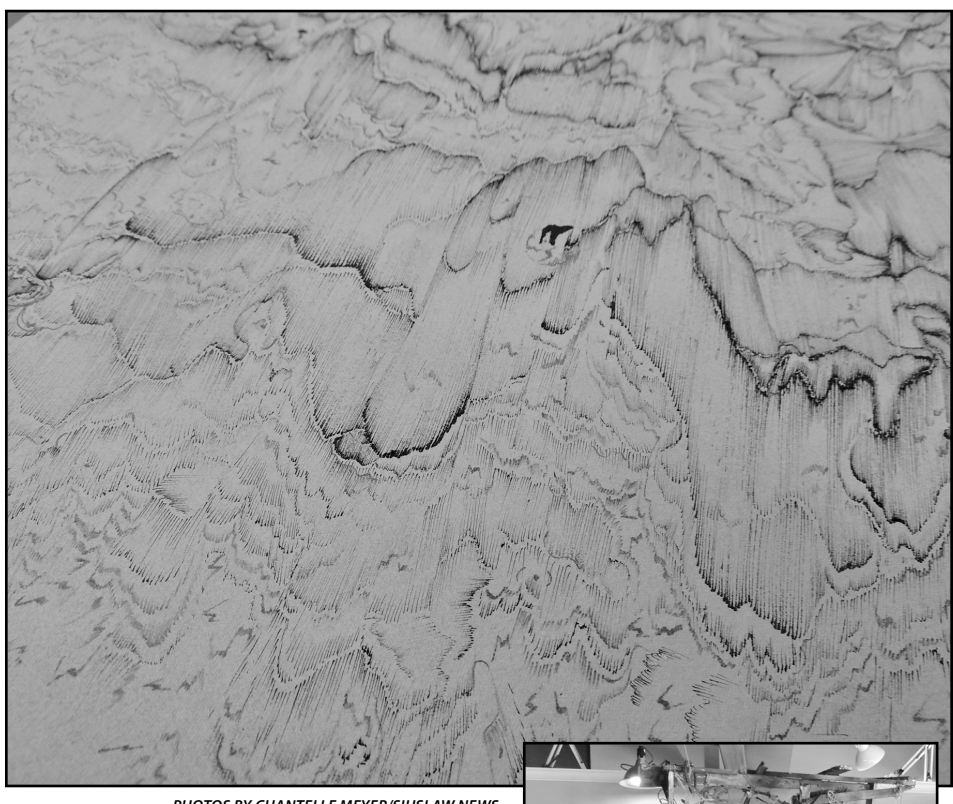
However, for Szalewski, curating is itself a form of art.

"It's the process," she said. "It's an art in and of itself. I'm just using other people's work to try and tell a story — to try to tell their story. I've known Kyle long enough that I think I know his story."

Lind's story will be shown through the displayed pieces — many in frames, some on loose canvas and some so fragile that the materials are crumbling.

Szalewski said the urge to create strikes the artist, and he uses whatever he has on hand, from paper boxes to cardboard. That leads to yellowing paper, torn edges and a mix of media in splashes of color.

"Sometimes I'll do a painting in five to 10 minutes, but usually it takes years," Lind said. "I work on some things a long time."



PHOTOS BY CHANTELLE MEYER/SIUSLAW NEWS

Mindpower Galley curator Tamara Szalewski said Kyle Lind's finely detailed hatch marking in his work ultimately led to the creation of "Atma" or "little soul spirits," as evidenced in 3D with "Spirit Man" (right).

Even natural disasters don't set the artist back. A large fire consumed some of his works, but later allowed him to push his damaged media into further works of art, even creating transformative works out of burned pages from old artbooks.

For Lind, surprise while making the work keeps him going. Creating brings him "pure joy."

"It's important when you express yourself that there are no bad things. It just makes me happy. I smile when I work," he said.

Szalewski also sees joy in Lind's work and continues to marvel at the new things she discovers in pieces that she's seen many times over the years.

"What fascinates me here is this style of drawing," she said. "Look at that hatch marking. It is his signature. It's mindboggling how much of his work is built on that hatch mark. Over and over you see it in his work."

In the artists' world, hatch marking is a series of finely drawn lines used to create shading and texture. In Lind's works, the hatch marks resemble finely wrought topographical maps, with different values nearly lifting from the surface.

"That hatch marking is what I call his signature. It is just unbelievable," she said, looking at a series of five drawings she had yet to frame. Those hatch marks eventually led to the tiny faces that are part of many of Lind's works.

Szalewski said he calls them "Atma," or "little soul spirit."

"It kind of came from this little whirlwind figure that he started creating from this style that advanced into these faces. It became this figure that he uses quite a bit," she said. "If you look at it in 3D with 'Spirit Man,' it's like creating that whirlwind of atoms in the three-dimensional world. … Looking at 'Spirit Man' in conjunction with the other works and the little hatch marks, it becomes almost graspable. You kind of go, 'Oh!'"

"I try to find myself," Lind said. "I don't mean my shallow self, but the real self, deep down. Art helps you understand you. If it's painting, photography or poetry, that makes God happy."

People who experience Lind's exhibit can expect to find newspaper clippings, dozens of photos of his history — everything that goes into retrospective — and tons of his work in a variety of genres.

"Museums and even galleries today are so regulated, that this is almost an impossible show anywhere else," Szalewski said. "It is unique to our area, and is kind of a wonderful way to look at something from an artistic mind that has, because of the nature of where and how he lives, been able to live the life he has. Look at what he's done with it. There's the journey of the soul right there. He's left his mark. He has managed for nearly 80 years to live a life totally as an artist, and he hasn't been dillydallying. He's been doing the work."

At nearly 80 years old, Lind said he is slowing down and has a bad shoulder. This is his last planned exhibit, though he hopes another gallery might later show the collection, or even a museum that can take it on for perpetuity.

"People often forget that every artist has their Mona Lisa — and we have Kyle's, the big drawing he spent 55 years on — but not every piece that a master does is a masterpiece," Szalewski said. "I do think Kyle is one of those modern-day masters. There's so much about who he is as a person and what he's accomplished with his art in a lifetime that makes all of that work. You have to be Kyle Lind to have that unique set of circumstances to create someone like him."

The Kyle Lind Retrospective Art Show takes place at the Mindpower Gallery, 417 Fir Ave. in Reedsport, from 5 to 7 p.m. on Friday, July 26. The work will be on display through Aug. 22.

For more information, visit the gallery's Facebook page or call 541-271-2485.

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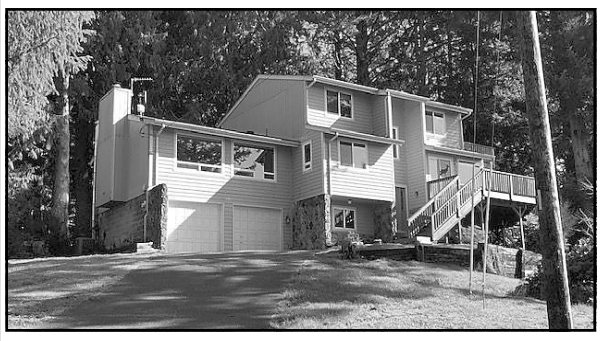

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