

# ARTS & CULTURE

## Creative talents returning downtown

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Art Walk is making a long-awaited comeback this Friday, May 28, after more than a year hiatus.

"We are excited," said event organizer Michele Rose. "We're calling this the 'soft opening,' because we actually had grand plans for last month and then we had to cancel, unfortunately."

Lane County's sudden rise to the "Extreme Risk" category of coronavirus cases caused organizers to call off the downtown celebration until lower case counts allowed for a proper congregation of creativity.

The event has a two-decade-long history with Main Street, initially inspired by a community of artists who wanted to create a showcase for creative work.

"And we've had some pretty well-known artists in this community over the years," said Rose. "It was a great way for them to show their local community what they do. Many of those artists go out of town to sell their art and so people just didn't know."

Friday will mark the first Art Walk since February 2020 and events will con-

tinue to be held on the last Friday of every month from 6 to 8 p.m.

As well as artists of various types, musicians, poets and jewelry-makers are counted among the talent putting their skills on display.

"So it's pretty broad when we say 'art,'" said Rose. "I'd love to see some local crafters set up here. ... And we really like to encourage artists who are starting out. I love mentoring people who are wondering, 'How do I frame it? How do I hang it?'"

Nearly all artists are from the area, but creatives from the broader region are also welcomed.

"We encourage businesses to stay local, but there are many amazing artists in Eugene as well, and so we don't say no," said Rose. "We usually try to feature our friends from Douglas County - Elkton, Drain, Yoncalla - at least once a year, too, because we feel like they're part of our community."

Age is no barrier either. Rose recalls featuring artists as young as six and as old as 91.

The celebration of art will operate much the way it has in past years. Participating



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHELE ROSE

businesses downtown will host and display artwork in their establishments and artists will be on hand to talk about their work, giving a chance for attendees to meet one-on-one and learn about the artist's inspiration.

If so inclined, artwork can also be purchased.

Businesses do not typically keep the work on display, however, making the event a potential one-time chance to experience the creative works.

"So if you don't come down for Art Walk then you're kind of missing out," said Rose. "You might not see that art again for a long time."

Past events have also provided light food and drink for the public, though coronavirus concerns are somewhat restricting this feature for the time being.

"This is a COVID-friendly Art Walk, so we're asking businesses at this time to only have packaged food items, rather than having beverages and food to eat within the business just so that people are not maskless in the businesses," explained Rose. "For masks, just stay within the guidelines that the state has asked us."

Oregon adopted the Centers for Disease Control guidance May 18, lifting its mask order for fully vac-

nated people in most public places. Unvaccinated Oregonians ages five and up are required to mask up for indoor workplaces and public settings and outdoors when physical distancing is not possible.

Music is making a return with the event as well.

Art Walk organizers compensate buskers to perform on the streets, providing an outdoor ambience as people wander from business to business.

"That's mainly where we put our money," said Rose,

adding that a "surprise" musical performance is planned for June, which will mark Art Walk's true grand opening.

Before COVID-19 restrictions put the brakes on gatherings, Art Walk had just transitioned to a year-round event. Rose hopes to continue that vision this year as well.

Any artist or musician who is interested in participating in Art Walk can call 541-514-0704 for more information.

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