

ARTS & CULTURE

Creativity finds variety at Art Walk

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Friday, July 30's Art Walk saw a healthy variety of artists and musicians. From Lacie Strebe's metalworking and beading to Lesley Strother's abstract paintings to Samba Ja's rhythmic drummers, there was something for everyone.

"I've always made jewelry, even stringing beads like every kid does," says Strebe.

Strebe is owner of The Jeweled Quail, a business named by her husband after a nickname for her. She makes jewelry that mimics the natural world, "I like things that look like maybe they were dug up," she says.

She stands amidst a collection of her pieces, all wrought by hand and without any heat or glue. Nature is her inspiration. The curves and spirals in nautilus shells and ferns are reflected in swirls of copper and silver wiring wrapped around semi-precious gemstones and pearls.

"I've always collected rocks and shells and sea glass and things," says Strebe, "so this has been a really good creative outlet for finding unusual pieces. I don't go for the perfect pieces. I usually go for slightly lower grade pieces because they're more interesting."

Nearby, Lesley Strother sits near her abstract paintings, colorful works of art featuring geometric shapes and angles. She finds inspiration through meditation, dreams, personal psychological issues and her own formal art training.

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Lacie Strebe's jewelry is all about the natural feeling. She uses rougher-looking stones to make things unique and original.

and design, she has learned to "play with the formal elements of line, shape, texture, value, color and space," according to her informational pamphlet.

She has been making art from a young age. Her mother was an artist and she recalls the presence of art everywhere growing up. She has since become a full-time artist, "or as much as I can be," she says.

"You make art for yourself," Strother says. "It's your way of being in the universe ... I'm responding to being here on this earth."

Both Strother and Strebe's

works were on display at Imagine It Framed. Strebe said she has been doing Art Walk since about 2019 and took a break in between due to the pandemic. But now that Art Walk is up and running again, it's a great opportunity for artists to show off their work.

Organizer Michele Rose encourages artists who aren't as established to contact her, or a business which participates. She hopes to get more businesses onboard to be able to showcase more artists.

Musical group Samba Ja were also showing off their art, in a

visual and audio context. As a group which specializes in samba reggae, it was hard not to hear the rhythmic beats coming from Opal Whitely Park in downtown.

People in the audience dance and tap their feet, having an all-around good time, the intended effect of Samba Ja's performances, says Musical Director Steven White.

"People can show up and be a part of it and that was kind of the appeal," he says.

He grew up with drums around and when the group's previous director moved to Portland in 2008,

White naturally moved into the position.

Much of what Samba Ja performs is based on original music from Salvador, Brazil.

"There's like a balance of learning stuff from teachers but also there's a bunch of these [samba reggae] groups up and down the West Coast and we'll share music and stuff with each other," says White. "Some of it we might've just learned on YouTube, watching videos of the groups in Brazil."

It's no easy feat to be ready for a performance. Most of the people in the group on Friday had been drumming with Samba Ja for over five or six years. With practices once a week, Samba Ja's members with more seniority have attended hundreds.

Despite the seemingly daunting numbers, there are beginner classes throughout the year for anyone wanting to take the first step into samba reggae drumming.

"When you show up just doing nothing, you've never even swung a stick before, getting to the point where you're like 'I feel good about doing this' can be various for people. It's a lot of just memorizing all these things," says White.

One thing in common between Strebe, Strother and White is a love of what they do and lots of practice. White emphasized the best part about it all, fun.

"I don't think there's any professional musicians [in Samba Ja]," he says. "It's all people who were into band, didn't necessarily ever play an instrument before they joined. It's about the fun."

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