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Haystack Rock Awareness Program outreach coordinator Pooka Rice

TRANSFORMATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

For three decades, the Stormy Weather Arts Festival has been a community staple for some of the region’s longstanding artists. But this year, the event will also mark some new beginnings.

The festival, now in its 31st year, will feature musical showcases, the Dancing in the Rain Fashion Show with local and national designer labels, and a series of open houses at various galleries to meet artists to discuss their creations through Nov 4.

For most artists, the weekend is an opportunity to show the fruits that come from a lifetime’s worth of creating. But for Stirling Gorsuch, his first foray into the arts festival will be a chance to showcase an entirely new medium.

Born and raised in Cannon Beach, the young artist is best known for his printmaking work, often inspired by the rugged, wildfire-torn hills of Eastern Oregon or by his jogs on the beach and through Oregon Coast landmarks like Oswald West and Ecola State Parks. Part of the intrigue, Gorsuch said, is that these landscapes embody the phenomenon of change and transformation.

“I’m always trying to find new vistas,” Gorsuch said. “A lot of photographs I use from these — secret trails let’s say — serve as inspiration. Both — the wildfires and the coast — show the transformation that you see in the natural world.”

But this time, the transformation is a personal one.



PHOTOS BY BRENNA VISSER

Students from Cannon Beach Academy work on a mural made of marine plastics for the Stormy Weather Arts Festival.

After years of watching his father do oil paintings for years, Gorsuch decided to give the brush a try.

“It was more of a challenge than I thought,” he said. “I thought I’d have a leg up with a printmaking background, but at the same time it’s a different animal completely.”

After years of visiting the festival as a spectator growing up, this will be Gorsuch’s first time showing as an artist for the festival. In some ways, the experience feels surreal. But in others, the creating for the Stormy Weather Art Festival feels nostalgic.



Marine debris such as old plastic toy parts, ropes and plastic spoons are used in Cannon Beach Academy’s mural.

“Most people know winter is my favorite season. I love the stormy weather ... it’s my most creative time,” he said. “For me, my inspiration is always in between storms, in the calmer times.”

This year will also feature work from an entirely new group of artists — about 33 new ones to be exact, who may or may not realize they are even artists yet.

For the first time, Cannon Beach Academy students have made a collective piece of artwork out of marine debris to be shown at Sandpiper Square. The project was facilitated through the

Haystack Rock Awareness Program’s “Trash Talk” — a program that turns microplastics into jewelry and art as a fundraiser for the environmental stewardship program — and the Cannon Beach Arts Association.

Participating in Stormy Weather Arts Festival serves a dual purpose for the academy Parent Teacher Organization volunteer Shelley Parker said.

“It’s a traditional Cannon Beach event. We wanted to do something educational, showcase what we’re doing with the kids and show they are an important part of the community as well,” Parker said.

When Parker reached out to arts association arts education director Meagan Sokol about expanding art opportunities within the new charter school, saw partnering with HRAP as a cost-effective and educational way to do so.

“It’s perfect for Stormy Weather because this project has everything to do with the beach,” said HRAP outreach coordinator Pooka Rice. “By doing this (the kids) are capable of bringing these lessons home to their families.”

But for some on the academy board, representation at the longstanding art festival is one step closer for the school to become once again a community staple.

“At Cannon Beach Elementary there was always a huge tradition of bringing art into the school. There was a whole week dedicated to it,” board member Barb Knop said. “All of this is bringing back a community tradition we once had.”

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