

Art-o-mat dispenses tiny works of art

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

LA GRANDE — Something new is coming to La Grande, and staff at Art Center East hope it attracts people from all over who are searching for one thing: Teeny, tiny art.

It's called Art-o-mat — a vending machine that dispenses artwork the size of a pack of cigarettes.

Why that specific size? Clark Whittington, Art-o-mat founder, created the first machine in 1997 from a recently banned cigarette machine.

There are now Art-o-mat machines selling tiny art around the world. The La Grande machine will be the fourth in Oregon — there are currently two in Portland and one in Eugene.

"We've heard people search for these machines. It's a good opportunity for

tourism," said Darcy Dolge, ACE executive director.

Dolge came across the Art-o-mat website in 2017.

"I've wanted one for the art center since then," she said. "We're so excited about it. It's a long time coming."

When a machine is requested, Whittington works with the host to customize it based on the space. The one for ACE will have a 1950s art deco style.

"He really caters the design to the space it's in," Dolge said. "Each machine he puts in so much love and character."

She said the Art-o-mat will be installed in late 2022 in ACE's Gift Gallery.

The company adds more artwork when needed.

"They restock the machines, just like a vending machine," Dolge said. "It's a great opportunity for the community to pur-

chase art, and for artists to become more connected."

She said the low cost of purchasing the art — \$5 each — is an affordable way to acquire an original work.

"Become an art collector for \$5 apiece," she said with a smile.

ARTISTS WELCOME TO APPLY

An art vending machine needs art, and Dolge is encouraging local artists to apply to the program through Artists in Cellophane.

"It is prime time for artists to apply," she said.

The Art-o-mat roster has about 400 artists from 10 countries.

"These are big-name artists," Dolge said.

The application process is open year-round. Once approved, an artist's work can be placed in any of the venues that host an Art-o-mat.

Due to the machine's original purpose, artwork must be a very specific size: 2 1/8 inches by 3 1/4 inches by 7/8 of an inch.

Art can be a solid piece, or a box containing a small work.

"It can be any medium — it just has to fit in the space," Dolge said.

To learn more about Art-o-mat, or



Clark Whittington/Contributed photo

An Art-o-mat vending machine similar to this will be placed at Art Center East in late 2022. Made from a repurposed cigarette vending machine, an Art-o-mat dispenses small works of original art.

to see the guidelines for applying as an artist, go to www.artomat.org.

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