

Local artist donates talent to food pantry

Mural symbolizes collective spirit, mission of organization

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

Local painter Billy Lutz approaches each work as a storybook.

From a single starting thought or concept, his pieces move through multiple layers of context to narrate a nuanced story to be read by the viewer.

Born in Michigan in 1951, Lutz did his first oil painting when he was 14. Over the years, his work became focused on what lies beneath the surface and themes, such as the environment and materialism, spiritual realities versus religious dogma, collectivism versus individualism and other dualities and paradoxes. His style is narrative painting that represents his complex philosophies.

"Painting seems to be the way I pursue my thinking," he said.

One of Lutz's latest works adorns the entryway of the recently completed South County Community Food Bank on North Roosevelt Drive.

Absorbing an area on the wall several feet tall and wide, the acrylic painting depicts a fruit tree laden with apples and bright leaves and bearing a thick trunk leading down to deep roots.

Mary Blake, a member of the food bank's board, said the organization wanted an image of a tree because it's "symbolic of the cycle of life" and the pantry's mission.

"Food reaches everybody — so the tree really was for that," she said.

To further reinforce the concept of natural harmony through connective movement, Lutz embellished the tree with his signature force rings, or geometric arcs suggestive of "all that exists that is unseen."

Lutz earned an associate of arts degree from Northwestern Michigan College in 1972, but while college helped him loosen up and experiment with art, life experiences mostly have motivated the philosophical concepts embedded in his work.

From an early age, Lutz was aware the world is filled with deep mysteries of which he was a part. He traverses these mysteries through his art. Lutz believes the concepts and ideas he encounters through his artwork are not unique but rather universal truths.

In his pieces, Lutz often will make religious parables and ancient mythologies relevant to the modern world. For instance, in his series "The Beast," Lutz follows the classical myth of the hero who fights the beast only to be consumed or defeated by it.

While humans are naturally inclined to fight traumatic experiences or afflictions, Lutz said, those "beasts" are



Renowned local artist Bill Lutz painted a mural of a fruit tree in the entryway of the South County Community Food Bank.

invincible and fighting against them only will harm the individual. To truly overcome their demons, people instead must learn to accept them.

Lutz related the series to one of his own "beasts," which is a hereditary degenerative eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa that started at age 47 and has slowly impaired his vision. Instead of being consumed with a desire to regain sight or fight the disease, Lutz reconciled himself to his condition and re-emerged slightly altered but with a new perspective and more established priorities.

"The myth states that you do have to accommodate your beasts, your demons. They're not going away," he said. "Nietzsche said it, Jesus Christ said it, Somerset Maugham said it and James the brother of Jesus said it. Sometimes in order to overcome your demons you have to embrace them. So it's not something I invented, but I happened to tap into it."

With only 15 percent of his eyesight remaining, Lutz has developed a specific technique to continue painting large works. He draws a smaller representation and then an assistant will create a graph for the image on its final destination, such as the wall in the food pantry. From there, Lutz can focus on one small section of the painting at a time. As he's painting, he said, he often will take photos of the work in progress or view it in a mirror. The strategy allows him to see the full work, although scaled down, and focus on a point.

When it comes to subject matter, Lutz usually starts with a thought he has previ-

ously jotted down in his notebook. As he's working, he'll develop that thought or allow it to work its way forward.

"The original idea blossoms into something more complex," he said.

He tries to keep his paintings in the present tense, because as soon as an experience has passed there exists the potential to remember or analyze it incorrectly or with the wrong perspective.

"I'm not trying to create life, I'm trying to find meaning as it happens to me," said Lutz.

That philosophy is evident in his life. Because of this sense of adventure and courage to live on the edge, Lutz has traveled often and lived in multiple states as new goals presented themselves to him.

He has supported himself through freelance sign work, but he keeps his art separate and not the means to his and his family's livelihoods. He prefers to donate his talent and produce his work for public consumption.

"I tried to keep money out of it for philosophical reasons," he said. "Money creates its own motives, and I wanted no influence on my painting."

Lutz believes contemporary society is fixated primarily on the acquisition of wealth, while being shackled to the idea that people's worth is determined by material possessions. In a system of unfettered capitalism, he said, things only are valuable when they are dead, which has led to disregard for the environment and the human spirit.

See Pantry, Page 10A

Art Walk comes to Gearhart

An art exhibit entitled "Spring Fling!" will be featured at Trail's End Art Center during the First Saturday Art Walk April 4 in Gearhart.

The Trail's End artists mount a new exhibition of paintings, drawings and photographs in April,

with all things spring. A public reception is planned from 2 to 4 p.m.

Trail's End, 656 A St., is an artists cooperative offering art opportunities to the community through workshops, painting groups, classes for kids and adults and monthly

exhibits of their original art.

Trail's End also features a small gift shop where prints, photos and greeting cards featuring member artists' work are available. The gallery's website is www.trailsend-art.org.



"Skunk Cabbage," a colored pencil drawing by Judi Marsh Garrity, will be displayed at Trail's End Gallery in Gearhart.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

PUBLISHER
Steve Forrester
INTERIM EDITOR
Dave Fisher
REPORTER
Katherine Lacaze
ADVERTISING MANAGER
Betty Smith
PRODUCTION MANAGER
John D. Bruijn
CIRCULATION MANAGER
Samantha McLaren
SYSTEMS MANAGER
Carl Earl
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Claire Lovell
John Rahl
Darren Gooch
Esther Moberg
ADVERTISING SALES
Laura Kaim
Wendy Richardson

SEASIDE Signal

Seaside Signal
The Seaside Signal is published every other week by EO Media Group, 1555 N. Roosevelt, Seaside Oregon 97138. 503-738-5561. www.seasidesignal.com

Letter policy
The Seaside Signal welcomes letters to the editor. The deadline is noon Monday prior to publication. Letters must be 400 words or less and must

be signed by the author and include a phone number for verification. We also request that submissions be limited to one letter per month. Send to 1555 N. Roosevelt Drive, Seaside, OR 97138, drop them off at 1555 N. Roosevelt Drive or fax to 503-738-9285. Or email nmccarthy@seasidesignal.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Annually: \$39.00 in county • \$55.00 in and

out of county • e-Edition: only \$30.00

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Seaside Signal, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103. Postage Paid at Seaside, OR 97138 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2015 © by the Seaside Signal. No portion of this newspaper may be reproduced without written permission. All rights reserved.

FAMOUS FOOTWEAR • GNC • KITCHEN COLLECTION • L'EGGS HANES BALI PLAYTEX EXPRESS • NIKE

SEASIDE FACTORY OUTLET CENTER

FACTORY OUTLET CENTER

12TH AVE. & HWY. 101 • SEASIDE, OR • 503.717.1603

[Find us on Facebook](#)
 SEASIDEOUTLETS.COM
 Authorized Shipping Outlet

Top Brands. Factory-Direct Prices. Free Coupon Book at Wine & Beer Haus or online.

24 Stores • UPS Shipping Center • Beauty Salon • Eateries
 Bruce's Candy Kitchen • Gifts for the Kitchen • Shoes • Books/Music
 Casual, Sports & Upscale Fashion • Bounce House for the Kids
 Wine Tasting Bar/Beer on Tap-1100 Fine Wines/450 Beers

WINTER HOURS (JANUARY-MARCH):
 SUNDAY-THURSDAY 10-6, FRIDAY-SATURDAY 10-8

TOKYO TERIYAKI • TOYS"R"US • TREE OF LIFE CHRISTIAN OUTLET • VAN HEUSEN ZUMIEZ

BOOK WAREHOUSE • BRUCE'S CANDY KITCHEN • CARTER'S T CLAIRE'S • DAISY MAY'S SANDWICH SHOP • DRESS BARN • EDDIE BAUER • OSH KOSH B'GOSH • PENDLETON • PERFECT LOOK • RACK ROOM SHOES • RUE21 • SEASIDE SHIPPING CENTER • THE WINE AND BEER HAUS

GRAND OPENING

APRIL 3RD TO APRIL 10TH, 2015

Join us for this week long celebration!

Owners Tracy and Margot Nye invite you to come taste their delicious, fresh Gelato and Sorbetto

Over 40 Flavors Made Fresh

Dairy Free/Vegan Options • Panini • Specialty Coffee

As part of the grand opening celebration they will donate 10% of the week's proceeds to Food 4 Kids Seaside. Saturday, April 11th at Noon is their official Ribbon Cutting hosted by the Seaside Chamber Ambassadors. Show your support and join us to help the kids and enjoy some Gelato!

8 N. Columbia in Seaside • OPEN DAILY

Between The Crabby Oyster and Norma's Seafood & Steak