

Can artists in Clatsop County make a living from their art?

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



David Ambrose is chairman of the Clatsop County Arts Council; Don Frank is co-chairman. The two were among representatives of the arts group to host the Clatsop County 2019 Arts Summit, “The Business of Art: Artists Teaching Arts.” We talked to them about what it takes for an artist to make their work profitable.

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Q: What’s going on in the county in terms of artists?

Ambrose: How many words do you want?

Q: Three-hundred-fifty?

Ambrose: I can do that. We’ve got a really creative county. There are a lot of creative people who are struggling to take their creativity and making it part of their making a living. We’re trying to focus on bringing people here who have worked out ways to do that and share those strategies who want to learn about how to make their creativity work for them and make more of a living at it.

Q: How did you choose the presenters today?

Ambrose: We don’t have a menu of resources, we tried to rely on who we could think, between the nine of us on the council, who would fit the needs of learning about copyright laws, we’ve got a presenter who makes her living doing house concerts. She just got back from Europe doing house concerts, the nuts and bolts of how you do that, how you market yourself on the internet. Things of that nature.

Q: These are real world solutions?

Ambrose: You don’t get to hear it from somebody who’s got a Powerpoint. You get to hear it from somebody who’s actually doing it.

Q: Are you a visual artist?

Ambrose: And musician. I play stand-up bass.

Q: Can you make a living at it?

Ambrose: No.

Q: Is that a goal? To make a living, or to have fun and make some extra bucks?

Ambrose: We’ll find a little more about that from our community here.

One of the other things we wanted to do was to get musicians together with visual artists, with theater people.

Q: Don, what is your role with the Arts Council?

Frank: David is the chair of the council, I’m vice chair.

Q: What is your lesson for young artists wanting to make money and not being taken advantage of?



David Ambrose, chairman of the Clatsop County Arts Council, and Don Frank, vice chairman of the council.

Summit urges budding artists to ‘think strategically’

It wasn’t “strictly business” at Tuesday’s Clatsop County 2019 Arts Summit, but anyone doubting the financial element in bringing art to the public learned otherwise at the afternoon event, “The Business of Art: Artists Teaching Artists.”

“Art Sales and Systems,” “Business Essentials,” “Business Outside the Box,” “Copyright Issues,” “Creative Capital” and “Exploring Income Streams” were topics of the event, presented by the Arts Council of Clatsop County at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

The Arts Council, formed in 2014, “is thriving,” county commissioner Sarah Nebeker told the audience. “I expect it will continue to grow and offer more opportunities for the arts and artists in our county.”

The arts bring a better quality of life and economic prosperity, she said. “This arts council has exceeded my expectations and hopes. I’m very grateful to them.”

“The arts mean business in Clatsop County,” arts council vice chairman Don Frank said.

Frank presented survey information indicating the impact of arts spending in the county.

in household income to local residents, and delivers \$1.3 million in local and state government revenue.

An updated study — Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 — is in the works, he said.

Joe Schulte, market president of Lewis & Clark Bank and a guitarist, shared how music offers positive effects for students, in education, test scores, self-esteem and attendance.

“Resources are at a premium for particularly education and music, as well as all the arts in the school system,” Schulte said. “I would encourage everyone to be vocal, support the arts community and arts education.”

Getting people together from all parts of the county, from all areas of arts, business and civic sector is “the key,” Frank said.

Artist Keri Rosebraugh, a Tigard native now exhibiting her work in Gearhart, described her own artistic journey.

“Being an artist is a difficult profession,” Rosebraugh said. “Being an artist is not just waving a magic wand. We need to be able to market ourselves, and our work. It’s important to set goals, think strategically, and lay out our resources.”

The 2017 Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 study indicated that nonprofit arts and culture sector is a significant industry in Clatsop County — one that generates \$13.7 million in total economic activity.

This spending — \$2.9 million by nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and an additional \$10.8 million in event-related spending by their audiences — supports 359 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$6.7 million

Artist Keri Rosebraugh at the Clatsop County Art Summit.

R.J. Marx

ARTS COUNCIL SEEKS TO FILL VACANCIES

Applications are being sought for three open seats on the Arts Council of Clatsop County.

The volunteer citizen committee’s mission is to support, promote and advocate for the arts in Clatsop County.

Membership is open to county residents or property owners, or those who own a business or rent studio space in the county. Terms run Jan. 1, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2022.

Deadline to apply is Dec. 13. Applications are available online at www.co.clatsop.or.us, at the Clatsop County Manager’s Office at 800 Exchange St., Suite 410, Astoria or by calling 503-325-1000. The appointment will be made by the county board of commissioners.

Frank: That’s life, isn’t it?

Q: Does everybody have to learn the hard way?

Frank: That’s a good question. No.

Some things do need to be learned the hard way of course, but this summit is trying to help jump-start that for people. Learn from others. Specifically artists teaching artists, people who have done it, who have been there, have done it the hard way.

Q: When should an artist work without pay?

Frank: One thing I think is vital is volunteerism. That’s key to the community.

But as far as artists giving their work away, there are situations when I might donate something for sure, but a person has to put value on their work. And that’s what this is.

Q: Is it better not to take a gig or a doesn’t pay or a minimal paying gig?

Frank: It depends on where you are in your career. or the purpose of it, for sure.

Q: There’s no hard-and-fast rule?

Frank: I don’t think so.

Ambrose: The one burning question I’d like to get answered is how do you say no when someone says, “Give us that piece of artwork for an auction or event.”

I’ve seen that happen. Someone gives a piece of work to the organization and it sells for \$10. It’s a real blow to the artist. How do you put some limits on that so you’re not taking advantage of them?

Frank: People might say, “Will you play our bar mitzvah?” They’re a friend, or they say, “We’ll give you credit.” Neither of those buys groceries.

If you open up a conversation with them, you can explain, “This is how we do this.”

Seaside photographer says, ‘Let’s discuss your dream’

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



Seaside photographer Lance Wagner has 35 years of experience capturing unique images

Seaside photographer Lance Wagner grew up in the Bay area before heading south to Orange County to attend Cal State Fullerton. After graduation he got a job shooting motorcycles and models for a Newport Beach modeling agency, although he said at the time all he really wanted to do was surf. For a time he worked for a retina specialist who admired his photographic skills and gave him a lot of space. Eventually he relocated to Los Angeles to the Silver Lake neighborhood where he pursued and grew his career in commercial photography.

Life brought him to Seattle where he was regularly working as a photographer for Nord-



Local high schoolers received an invitation from photographer Lance Wagner for free yearbook portraits.

strom and National Geographic, although he frequently returned to LA to work for Fuji Film, another longtime client. In Seat-

tle he developed and expanded his client list, which included Donna Karan, the Seattle Mariners, and Olivia Newton-John.

In 2001 he met the love of his life, his wife Trixie. On a whim, that year, Wagner saw Seaside for the first time.

“It was a romantic spot,” Wagner said. “We were quite taken with it and kept returning to visit.”

Two years ago Wagner and his wife decided to make Seaside their home.

He is currently developing his photography business, which will include Seaside Senior Portraits, Lance Wagner Photography, and VacationHomePhotographer.com

Portrait photography is one of Wagner’s specialties.

“People,” he said, “are really my thing.”

With 35 years in the business of taking pictures, he’s an expert at lighting, using hot lights, strobes, and of course, natural light.

“I enjoy bringing out the subject’s individual personality,” Wagner said. “I’m creating an image, not just a picture.”

For a recent senior portrait of a local Seaside youth, Wagner shot with a Petzval lens on a sunny October day.

“The Petzval objective or Petzval lens is the first photographic portrait objective lens in the history of photography,” Wagner said. “It was developed by the German-Hungarian mathematics professor Josef Maximilian Petzval in 1840 in Vienna.”

Wagner has a fully equipped photographic studio at his home in Seaside on Avenue T. He’ll also shoot on location, or your home, if that’s your thing.

“I can shoot on film, digital, or tintype,” he said. “This is custom portraiture, so let’s discuss your dream.”

Check it all out on Facebook at Seaside Photographer Lance Wagner, or call 503-739-6745 to discuss and set up an appointment.

‘PEOPLE ARE REALLY MY THING.’