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Schneider Museum shows Oregon biennial artists

Curator Michelle Grabner drove 1,800 miles and visited more than 100 studios as she scoured Oregon for artists to include in a state biennial exhibition.

Rather than show her selections in a centralized exhibit in Portland, her finds are on display throughout Oregon. To further mix the pot, the work of Portland artists has been sent far afield to sites that include Pendleton and Ashland, while pieces by outlying artists were brought to Oregon's biggest city.

Five artists from Portland and Eugene will be showcased in "Portland2016: A Biennial of Contemporary Art" at the Schneider Museum of Art on the Southern Oregon University campus, near the intersection of Siskiyou Boulevard and Hargadine streets, Ashland. The first iteration of the biennial was staged in its namesake city, but the biennial has exploded in size and geographic reach this year.

An opening reception will be held for the artists from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday, July 15, at the Schneider. The show will run through Sept. 17. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Admission is free.

"The majority of artists are showing brand-new work that has never been seen in Southern Oregon," says museum director Scott Malbaurn. "It's fun and exciting to participate in what's being called 'Oregon's largest art show.' "

While the Rogue Valley art scene leans toward representational art, with a heavy dose of landscapes, the Portland2016 biennial is decidedly modern. Grabner, who curated the internationally recognized Whitney Biennial in 2014, has picked cutting-edge contemporary art, often with a strong conceptual component.

The work of Eugene-based Mike Bray spans video, installation and printmaking, while Portland artist David Eckart uses fabricated objects, drawings, paintings, prints, installation and performance.

Also from Portland, Brenna Murphy creates digitally manipulated work that brings to mind computer circuit boards, video game imagery and other elements from our digitally saturated world.

Portland artist Giles Lyon studied medical illustration before branching into hyper-colorful, frenzied pop surreal paintings, comic book abstractions and detailed ink drawings.

The most traditional among the group, Storm Tharp creates cubist-style mixed media paintings of fractured faces seen from multiple angles simultaneously.

The Portland2016 biennial includes 34 artists and artist teams, with 13 coming from outside Portland. Their work is displayed in Portland, Ashland, Bend, Clatskanie, The Dalles, Madras, McMinnville, Pendleton, Roseburg, Salem, La Grande and Astoria in venues that range from museums and galleries to hotel and theater lobbies.

See www.portlandbiennial.org for information about the artists and participating sites.



Portland artist Storm Tharp's mixed media "Kids, Dads" is part of the "Portland2016: A Biennial of Contemporary Art" at the Schneider Museum of Art in Ashland.