

SHEDCO's Storefront Art turned vacant storefronts to sidewalk galleries

By Kannikar Petersen

St. Helens Economic Development Corporation (SHEDCO) invites you to check out the newly installed art exhibited in the storefronts next to Houlton Bakery and next to Chase Bank on Columbia Blvd. These are part of the SHEDCO's Storefront Art project to improve people's experience of St. Helens' main streets by turning vacant storefronts into sidewalk art galleries.

In the storefront next to Houlton Bakery are paintings by Oregon artist Erik Sandgren. Sandgren is a practicing and widely exhibiting artist as well as professor of Fine Arts and Humanities at Grays Harbor College. He has been the primary visual art professor there since 1989.

He has a BFA from Yale College (1975) and an MFA in painting and printmaking from Cornell University (1977). His father was a professor of painting at Oregon State University; he grew up in a household saturated with visual art and visiting artists.

Sandgren was awarded a Fulbright Teaching Exchange posting to England and has received two sabbatical leaves from GHC for European travel to paint. He has twice been artist in residence with the Alfred and Trafford Klots Program in Rochefort-en-Terre, Brittany. He is a member of Print Arts Northwest, and has served six years as a board member of the Washington State Technical and Community College Humanities Association.

In the space next to Chase Bank on Columbia Blvd and N. 19th St are paintings and charcoal drawings by Dee Vadnais. A graduate of the Museum School in Portland in 1976, Vadnais lives in Deer Island, Oregon where she pursues her passion for painting in the landscape in coastal mountains, beaches and forests. Recent journeys have taken her and her husband to Mexico and British Columbia aboard their boat. These excursions also provide opportunities for painting on-site, albeit often in difficult conditions.

Vadnais uses acrylic and watercolor on-site. She also works in her Deer Island studio painting, drawing and printmaking. She has recently completed a show of work based on images from her journeys to British Columbia, focusing on the nation of Haida Gwaii and other British Columbia Native American Peoples.

Sharing the storefront with Vadnais' paintings are illustrations of the preliminary design of US 30 & Columbia Blvd/ St. Helens Street Corridor Master Plan by the City of St. Helens' consultant team: Angelo Planning Group, Greenworks PC, and Kittelson & Associates, Inc. The Corridor Master Plan project is an ongoing project funded by a grant received from ODOT. The intent is to create a St Helens streetscape that reflects the community's vision and to improve the aesthetics and function of the corridor to attract business and investment. For more information of the project, please visit the project website at <http://www.sthelenscorridorplans.com/websites/17>

The Storefront Art project is a collaboration between SHEDCO and the Columbia Art Guild. Artists or building owners who are interested in participating in the project, please contact Kannikar Petersen, kpeteren@akaandesign.com

