

# *Oregon's Percent for Art Program: A Public Legacy*

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CONNECTIONS | PERCENT FOR ART | SEPTEMBER 2006



OREGON ARTS  
COMMISSION

# Oregon Realizes its Commitment to Art in Public Spaces

Living up to its pioneering reputation, Oregon was one of the first states in the nation to pass Percent for Art legislation. Enacted in 1975, the state statute guides the acquisition of Oregon's State Art Collection, which includes more than 2,500 original art works. From Astoria to Agness, Baker City to Milton-Freewater, Bend to Klamath Falls, state buildings and public spaces host permanent reminders of the breadth, variety and aesthetics of our history, environment, people, and changing concerns.

## How the Percent for Art Program Developed

The Percent for Art statute (ORS 276.075) sets aside "not less than 1% of the direct construction funds of new or remodeled state buildings with construction budgets of \$100,000 or greater for the acquisition of art work which may be an integral part of the building, attached thereto, or capable of display in other State Buildings."

Since its inception, the Percent for Art program has maintained:

- A commitment to the placement of permanent art of the highest possible quality in public places where it is accessible to the broad public;
- A commitment to the successful integration of artist, the public and architects working together as a team; and

*"I can never assume that I am in the studio alone. For I am in a partnership as I work. I am a partner with the site and the community. I am a partner with the city and its bureaus, with its citizens and with the future of place. And my goal in these partnerships is to create a work which will provide a personal experience within the public setting, and keep on ticking."*

- Tad Savinar  
Artist, Portland

- A commitment to helping artists attain public recognition and visibility through Percent for Art opportunities.

The Percent for Art Program remains dedicated to the enhancement of the public environment and improvement of the character and quality of state buildings in order to create an accessible, publicly owned legacy that is uplifting, enduring and available to all.

## How Public Artworks Are Selected

Artworks acquired through the Public Art program are selected and commissioned by art selection committees comprised of community members, the project's architect and arts professionals. The Oregon Arts Commission's Visual Arts Coordinator facilitates the overall process, serving as a non-voting chair of each committee. Separate committees are formed for each project.

Through a series of meetings, the art selection committee evaluates possible styles, materials and locations in order to select artwork appropriate for each building. Most committees solicit artists' proposals which are reviewed for artistic merit and suitability to the facility. Through shared discussion and review, the art selection committee makes final selections of both the artist and the works of art in a building.

## Impact of the Collection

Since 1975, over 200 state construction projects have qualified for Percent for Art funds, and over 1,800 Oregonians have participated on art selection committees. Thousands of state workers, citizens and visitors have noticed, admired, debated, questioned, and appreciated art works across the state.

Oregon's state art collection now numbers over 2,500 works of art, including drawings, paintings, mixed media, photography, original prints, sculpture, ceramics, glass, mosaics, murals, textiles, and both site specific and structurally integrated art installations. Value of the collection continues to appreciate, both in terms of dollars and in the uniqueness of the works.

## Public Artists, Community and Economy

The collection is a testimony to the fact that Oregonians care about how we live. By placing fine works of art in our public buildings, we confirm that the creative imaginations of our artists are a state resource worthy of encouragement and nourishment. It also conveys that we want Oregon's artists to stay and



Lee Kelly, "Naga" (left), and Terry Toedtmeier, "Basalt Clastics," from the collection of the Valley Library, Oregon State University.



Artist Anne Storrs used native plant imagery to create unexpected cast stone sculptures in the landscape at the Senator Mark O. Hatfield West Trailhead in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area in Hood River, Oregon. This Millennium Trail project, one of fifty-one throughout the United States, celebrated our national history and encouraged artworks that allowed the public to experience these trails not only as a form of recreation and transportation, but as a journey of discovery.



Hundreds of aluminum scales in Tim Prentice's kinetic sculptures catch the slightest movement of air to activate a vast atrium in Oregon State University's Kelly Engineering Building.

work in our state just as surely as we want to sustain the state's natural and economic resources.

Public artists have been called on to envision public environments, working with architects and communities to create memorable spaces for Oregonians and visitors. Percent for Art projects are often inseparable from the history and architecture of our buildings, such as Wayne Chabre's ornate bronze gates of the Archive Building in Salem, or the rotunda mosaic in the Hannon Library at Southern Oregon University. Artists design inviting public courtyards, places for children to play and adults to learn. They make sculpture that we admire, navigate by, give nicknames to. Their paintings and photographs represent the history and places of Oregon, and the best creative talents of our region.

More than 300 public art programs on the local, state and federal levels operate across the United States. There is a depth and concentration of programs in the Pacific Northwest, and the many professional artists who reside and create public art in this region also work across the country and the world.

Percent for Art projects create jobs, and support other arts workers who contribute to local economies. Artists are commissioned as contractors. They, in turn, hire local companies to cast metal, pour concrete, frame and install works. They rent studios, hire local trucks and cranes. In a typical outdoor artwork commission, upwards of 80% of the costs return immediately to the Oregon economy.



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Portland State University



PHOTO: BRUCE FORSTER

*“TECOTOSH” defines the urban plaza at Portland State University.*

***In a Public Setting, Art Melds with Engineering***

Portland artist Ed Carpenter’s sculpture, “TECOTOSH,” illustrates the four basic principles of engineering – tension, compression, torsion, and shear – and creates a gateway to Portland State University’s Maseeh College of Engineering and Computer Science.

Joining stainless steel with dichroic glass, the arching work projects bright kinetic patterns across the building’s entry plaza and surrounding architecture. “This interaction of structure and light represents the joining of the engineered world with the natural world; science with nature. We understand the behavior of

materials, structures, and light; but when they are combined in this way there remains an overriding sense of mystery,” said Carpenter of his material choices.

A renowned public artist living in Portland, Oregon, Ed Carpenter has been creating artworks for public spaces since the early 1970s. In the three years that Carpenter worked on “TECOTOSH,” he purchased materials from eight local companies and relied on the services of fifteen subcontractors, including engineers, glass fabricators and crane companies.

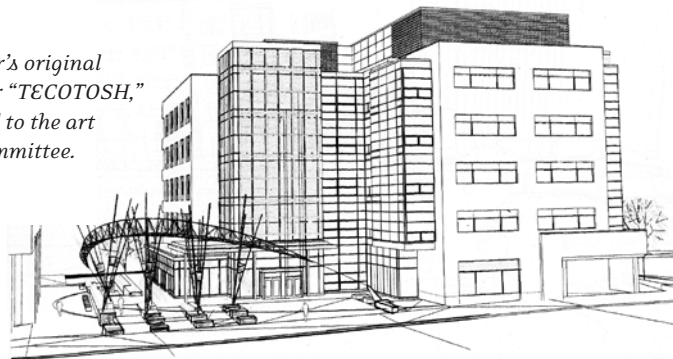
**PROJECT**  
“TECOTOSH,” 2006

**ARTIST**  
Ed Carpenter

**MEDIA**  
Stainless steel, dichroic glass, lighting

**LOCATION**  
Maseeh College of Engineering & Computer Science,  
Portland State University

*Ed Carpenter’s original drawings for “TECOTOSH,” as presented to the art selection committee.*



Southern Oregon University

***With Ancient Technique, Husband and Wife Bring Timeless Theme to Life***

In 1998, American husband and wife team Robert Stout and Stephanie Jurs, known collectively as Twin Dolphin Mosaics, moved to Ravenna, Italy – an internationally known center of Byzantine mosaics – to study traditional Roman and Byzantine tiling techniques.

Their 615-square-foot design for the grand entrance of SOU’s Hannon Library is composed of three interlocking design motifs. The looping curves that rotate around the perimeter are reflective of wind patterns on the earth’s surface. The central spiral motif is based on an astrophysics computer model of spiral arm galaxy data. The closely spaced lines that fan out around the circumference reflect fluid mechanics (physics).

Twin Dolphin Mosaics designs, produces and installs each of their works themselves. When they learned their proposal for the library rotunda had been selected, they worked for eight months in Italy finalizing the design. An SOU Media Arts Department production team of faculty and students traveled there to document the process of creating and assembling the mosaic.

The project culminated in six weeks during the summer of 2005, when Robert Stout was in residence in the Hannon Library, meticulously installing “Resonance and Dispersion.” The level of community support for the work struck Stout, who said, “The artists in Ashland were very welcoming and generous. Not only visual artists – but dancers, writers, playwrights, actors and musicians – stopped by and talked with me, expressing their appreciation for the intricacies of the work.”

**PROJECT**  
“Resonance and Dispersion,” 2005

**ARTISTS**  
Twin Dolphin Mosaics

**MEDIA**  
Ceramic and glass smalti mosaic

**LOCATION**  
Hannon Library, Southern Oregon University,  
Ashland



PHOTOS: KEN ROYCE PHOTOGRAPHY

*Above: Artist Robert Stout installs each ceramic piece of “Resonance and Dispersion” by hand. Below: The completed medallion mosaic seen from a second floor balcony.*



State of Oregon,  
North Mall  
Office Building



Made of reclaimed cedar, Lee Imonen's "The Sampo," offers an organic counterpoint to the modern building.



**A Landmark Sculpture Connects with Sustainability Theme**

The North Mall Office Building in Salem, designed by Portland architecture firm Yost Grube Hall, was Oregon's first building project constructed under the guidelines of Governor Kitzhaber's May 2000 Executive Order on Sustainability. With that intent, the art selection committee challenged artists to propose works that embodied the goal of sustainability, would engage the public and complement the architecture. Oregon native Lee Imonen's proposal for a 30-foot sculpture of salvaged cedar accomplished all three of these goals.

Imonen, a graduate of Willamette University, holds a MFA in sculpture from the University of Oregon. His sculpture, "The Sampo," responds directly to the sustainable theme of the building through its use of the full height of several salvaged cedars, reclaimed from a fire in Roseburg, as the primary material for the piece. Standing just over thirty feet high, the sculpture is the centerpiece of the building's exterior courtyard. Conceptually, the work strikes a balance between environmental resources (cedar) and mechanization (the fabricated structural elements linking the large timbers). In its overall form, it references a regenerating cycle of energy, beginning as a line and circling a spoked wheel.

Imonen's inspiration for the form is derived from

Finnish mythology, the Kalevala, in which gods create a magical harvesting mill, "the Sampo," to help the people work with the land. The artist felt this story helped portray Oregon's own connection with land.

Portland Art Museum curator Bill Mercer, who served on the art selection committee, commented, "The design of Imonen's piece is very dynamic, the motion incorporated into the sculpture itself is very strong. It will truly be a landmark piece of sculpture. When we're looking at public art, we consider the legacy of what these pieces will ultimately be. This is a major piece by a young artist whose career is certainly going to go up and up and up."

**PROJECT**

"The Sampo," 2003

**ARTIST**

Lee Imonen

**MEDIA**

Salvaged wood, galvanized steel

**LOCATION**

State of Oregon North Mall Office Building, Salem



Artist Lee Imonen, creator of "The Sampo."



PHOTO: COURTESY OREGON COAST COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

Artist Lon Brusselback installing his whale skeleton sculpture, "Qummi Kaltchik (Whale - Its Spirit)," in Newport's Don Davis Park overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The work symbolizes the culture, history and ecology of the Oregon Coast.

**Developing Public Art in Oregon's Smaller Communities**

Oregon communities from Newport to Bend, Salem to Grants Pass have undertaken local public art projects.

Why public art? The character of a place develops slowly through the interaction of all its parts - its citizens and cultures and the way they shape the natural environment. Art can enhance a growing community, boost an economically challenged community, or provide a public amenity for the good of the community-at-large.

Public art opportunities should first be considered within the context of the vision for the community. Consider how public art can enhance that vision. What is art? What is public art?

We use the term "art" broadly to signify those things that are visually meaningful. "Public" designates those places that, whether owned by the government or by a private entity, are open and accessible to the public.

Public art can take many forms, including free-standing sculptures, landscape treatments, murals, fountains, kinetic pieces that move and react to the environment, and artist-designed functional elements such as lighting, paving, street furniture and bridges. It can be permanent or temporary, a single installation or part of an on-going process enhanced over

time. It can include the written word or performances.

Public art should be an integral part of the design and planning of a community, and each public art project should be connected to larger community-building efforts or city-wide goals, such as the creation of new or renewed public spaces, a new street or pedestrian path, or a new building. Communities can greatly benefit from a public art plan that identifies opportunities for public art.

What works in one community may not be the best project for another. Examining similar communities and projects can be useful for understanding the process, but truly successful projects allow the artist(s) and public art committee to develop their unique ideas. Design your community and your public art for yourselves. In that way, you will enjoy your place and it is likely that visitors will enjoy its unique character.

The Oregon Arts Commission's Arts Builds Communities Program offers technical assistance and matching grant opportunities for arts and community development projects - including public art planning - to local governments and non-profits. Visit the Commission's website, [www.oregonartscommission.org](http://www.oregonartscommission.org), or call (503) 986-0083 for more information.

Americans for the Arts' Public Art Network (PAN) develops professional services for the broad array of individuals and organizations engaged in the expanding field of public art. Their website offers bibliographies, planning tools, public art images, listserves and other resources:

[www.artsusa.org/services/public\\_art\\_network/](http://www.artsusa.org/services/public_art_network/)

## Artist Profile

### *Henk Pander: Working in the Public Realm*

Oregon's public art collection includes multiple works by Portland artist Henk Pander. His artwork can be found at the Department of Forestry, University of Oregon, Oregon State University and the State Capitol in Salem. In addition to being one of the state's most accomplished studio artists, Pander has created a reputation for immersing himself in study for public commissions as well as his personal work. When the New Carissa shipwrecked off the Oregon coast, Pander sought permission to make studies on site. He flew on his own to document post 9/11 New York, and has been granted entrance to NASA and Boeing Field to study and document aircraft.

In 2001, Pander was commissioned to create a large oil painting for the state's Department of Forestry Headquarters in Tillamook. Traveling by camper, he took up residence in remote locations in the Tillamook Forest, venturing out with forestry staff to study the landscape and better understand its complexities.

When Oregon's Public Safety Training Academy opened in Salem in 2006, a collection of Pander's watercolors and conté studies was installed in the building's hallways,



*Artist  
Henk Pander  
in his studio.*

PHOTO: JULIE KEEFE

leading to a major painting, "The Road," which graces the massive dining room's almost eleven foot long wall. For this commission, Pander accepted the challenge to document the many different public safety personnel who would train at the Academy.

Said Pander of the experience, "I requested a series of ride-alongs with various police, sheriff and fire departments to inform myself of the work of those agencies and to develop visual materials that reflected the experiences. I spent time in Hillsboro, Tillamook, Dallas, Redmond and LaGrande. I spoke to many officers and witnessed many situations - from domestic to corrections to traffic accidents."

"In my travels, I discovered their work to be complex, dangerous and multifaceted. Some of my watercolors are explorations of possibilities for other major paintings; others are witness to moments and conditions I met in my adventures with the various agencies. My work, "The Road," is the culmination of my experiences, an imaginary image of a traffic accident. It is set in a timeless central Oregon landscape where the immediacy, danger and conflict of contemporary life takes on its urgency."

*"Some of my watercolors  
are explorations of  
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and conditions I met in  
my adventures ..."*

- Henk Pander



*The centerpiece of  
Henk Pander's  
commission for  
the Public Safety  
Academy, "The Road,"  
oil on canvas,  
80 x 142 in.*

PHOTO: NESS-PACE STUDIO



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