

# A fine arts vision

## Art and the artist come together for new summer festival in Bend's Old Mill District

By Jim Witty / *Bend Bulletin* April 22, 2008



Central Oregon's summer calendar borders on brimming, but organizers of a new fine-arts event hope to claim an unfilled niche.

The inaugural Art in the High Desert Festival in Bend's Old Mill District promises something a little different.

"This is about original art made by the hands of the artists who will be there," said organizer Dave Fox, a glass artist.

"They have been well-juried and vetted," added his wife, Carla, a fine-jewelry maker and the festival's director.

Festival judges have been busy doing just that, winnowing the varied work of 350 artists from 27 states and Canada down to 100 of the best. The artists, whose works include ceramics,

Art in the High Desert Festival board members, from left, Carla Fox, Nancy Becker and Dave Fox, are pictured with a bowl crafted by Becker. They're planning a three-day fine-arts festival this summer in Bend.



#### Submitted photo

This “Zoa necklace” was created by Art in the High Desert Festival board member and exhibitor Carla Fox.

painting, photography, sculpture, jewelry, glass, wood and fiber, will gather on the greenbelt adjacent to the Les Schwab Amphitheater on Aug. 22-24. They’ll be there to explain their works, get acquainted with visitors and make a sale or two.

“For a first-year event, this is an excellent response and a tribute to the cultural reputation of the Bend area,” said Carla, adding that the mere mention of Bend swayed several of the out-of-town artists to submit their applications.

Volunteer coordinator Nancy Becker points to other successful art festivals, such as Portland’s Art in the Pearl, the Festival of Arts in Bellevue, Wash., and the Art Festival in La Quinta, Calif., when describing the vision for Art in the High Desert.

“We want to involve the community,” she said. “We want them to come play, to participate. People (in Central Oregon) are ready,” she said.

So, apparently, are artists from around the country. The fledgling festival received an invaluable shout-out late last year from the Art Fair Source Book, which Carla describes as the “gold standard guide” for art festivals throughout the



[Submitted photo](#)

“Crosswalk,” a painting by Bend artist Jan Verdieck, will be on exhibit at this summer’s Art in the High Desert Festival.

country.

The book took the unusual step of endorsing a first-year event as a festival that serious artists don’t want to miss, she said.

Dave cites the region’s changing demographics for the intense interest in events such as the First Friday Art Walk and Art Hop in downtown Bend.

“Bend has embraced the visual arts,” he said. “The volume of people moving around and looking at art here has really increased.”

The event, says Dave, is focused solely on art, as opposed to the more generalized street festivals that are so popular in Bend.

“This community is eager to look at a broader range of fine art,” he said.

About eight years ago, Dave and Carla moved to Bend from Portland, where they were involved in a fabric and metal sculpture business. Dave started working with glass when they couldn’t find the right glass tiles for their new home.

Another Art in the High Desert Festival board member, Becker is a glass blower in Deschutes River Woods. Board member Jan Verdieck is a Bend painter.



[Submitted photo](#)

“Single Leaf” by glass blower Nancy Becker, of Bend, is one type of art to be featured in the Art in the High Desert Festival.

into the fabric of what you’re looking at and seeing. It’s the soul of the artist. Every piece of art that we have has little bits of that artist and a story that adds so much flavor. There are elements of their lives that are now part of mine.”

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Board member Darrel Buttice, of Bend, is past president of the Rose Festival Association in Portland.

The board’s vision reaches farther than putting on a fine-art show. The five-member nonprofit board hopes to generate enough money to plow back into Central Oregon, namely art programs for the Deschutes Public Library System.

A comparatively weak economy won’t hurt the festival going in, Dave said, because many art buyers typically prioritize their purchases, ranking a cherished painting or table over a few expensive dinners, for instance.

Fox said that perhaps the most valuable thing about the festival is that it will give prospective buyers an opportunity to get to know the artists.

“It’s hearing and learning the stories that are told by the artist about what they’re making,” he said. “That gets