CREATIVE VITALITY in OREGON 2007
ASSessing Oregon’s Creative Vitality

There’s good news in this year’s report measuring the state’s creative vitality. Most notable is the fact that Oregon’s overall index has strengthened from 1.05 to 1.12 as measured against the national average (1.00). While the index is understandably strongest in the Portland metro region, the report shows that creativity is not limited to population centers.

Last year, as the Commission marked its fortieth year as a state arts agency, we undertook a closer examination than ever before of the overall effect of our work. How healthy are Oregon’s arts nonprofits? How creative are we as a state? How far does our creative economy reach, and do local communities share in its benefits? Is Oregon competitive in the global creative economy? How have we, through policy and funding, made a difference?

In our search for answers, we conducted a Creative Vitality Index for Oregon. A concept developed by our colleagues at the Washington State Arts Commission, the Index measures the health of the creative economy in a city, county, state, or other geographic area compared to a national index. It includes both for-profit and nonprofit arts-related activities, and measures participation in the arts. Using readily available, inexpensive data on employment and community participation, the index is a reflection of the vigor of this sector of the economy and culture.

Why move away from the traditional model of an arts and economic impact report? The Creative Vitality Index can capture a fuller picture of the health of a creative economy by looking at both creative occupations and participation in the arts. Traditional economic impact studies measure the impact of nonprofit arts organization on a community. The cvi counts the thousands of people who make their living using creativity outside of the nonprofit arts world: visual artists, graphic and product designers, writers, architects, etc. It also counts the many individuals who participate in the arts by buying music, musical instruments, books, and works of art. In short, we get a more accurate picture of the full range of artistic creativity in our state.

The 2007 cvi builds on that knowledge by giving us a progress report. Numbers go only so far, however. For most of us, it’s the human component that brings a story to life. This year, as last, we include profiles, featuring urban and rural examples, that highlight the variety of ways creativity contributes to the people, businesses, communities, and economies of Oregon: how a small interactive media company in Portland appeals to blue-chip museum clients, how puppets created in Scappoose make it to Broadway, and how a ranch in Eastern Oregon funnels sustainable practices into a creative enterprise, to name a few.

Taken together, the Index and the profiles reinforce the fact that nonprofit arts organizations, public arts agencies, for-profit arts efforts and thousands of supporters everywhere, are part of an interdependent whole, the vitality of which is essential to the greater economy and community.

The arts and culture don’t just “happen,” of course. They have to be made, out of creativity, talent, ambition, and opportunity - qualities that live in every Oregon community. There are hundreds of stories from around Oregon of how creativity makes a difference in people’s lives. We want to hear yours.

Christine D’Arcy
Executive Director
The Creative Vitality Index measures the health of the creative economy in a city, county, state or other geographic area compared to the national index, and creates a benchmark for future measurement. The Index has two major components. One component measures seven indicators of community PARTICIPATION in the arts, the other measures concentrations of arts-related EMPLOYMENT.

Seven indicators of community PARTICIPATION in the arts.

1) Income of nonprofit arts organizations
2) Income of other nonprofit organizations with a record of arts activity
3) Per capita CD and bookstore sales
4) Per capita musical instrument and supply store sales
5) Per capita photography store sales
6) Motion picture theater attendance
7) Per capita museum and art gallery revenues from ticket and product sales

40% Arts-related EMPLOYMENT in more than 30 professional categories.

- Actors, Producers and Directors
- Advertising, Promotions Managers
- Agents, Business Managers
- Announcers
- Architects, Landscape Architects
- Architecture Teachers
- Art, Drama, Music Teachers
- Art Directors
- Audio, Video Equipment Technicians
- Broadcast, Sound Technicians
- Camera Operators, TV, Video, Movies
- Commercial, Industrial Designers
- Dancers, Choreographers
- Directors, Religious Activities, Education Editors
- English Language, Literature Teachers
- Fashion, Floral Designers
- Film, Video Editors
- Fine Artists
- Graphic, Interior Designers
- Librarians
- Media Equipment Workers
- Multimedia Artists and Animators
- Music Directors, Composers
- Musical Instrument Repairers, Tuners
- Musicians, Singers
- Other Art, Design Workers
- Other Media, Communications Workers
- Photographers
- Public Relations Managers
- Public Relations Specialists
- Set, Exhibit Designers
- Technical Writers
- Writers and Authors

* Post-secondary
** of Artists, Performer, Athletes
Understanding the Creative Vitality Index

What is the Creative Vitality Index?
The Creative Vitality Index is an annual measure of the health of the arts-related creative economy in a specified geographic area.

What is an index?
An index is a statistical term that means a “quantity whose variation over a period of time measures the change in some phenomenon.” Indexes draw from multiple sources of data that represent the “phenomenon.” The most well-known examples of indexes are the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the Consumer Price Index and the Index of Leading Economic Indicators, which measure the health of our economy.

What does the Creative Vitality Index measure?
In the case of the Creative Vitality Index, the “phenomenon” measured is the economic well-being of the creative sector in a determined area. It combines seven different participatory indicators, like bookstore sales, film attendance, or gallery sales, as well as primary and secondary arts-related occupations. This combined information is compared to the national average, which is one. Any Creative Vitality Index number above 1.00 is better than the national average; a number below 1.00 is less than the national average.

Where does this information come from?
The Creative Vitality Index draws data from four major sources: the Oregon Employment Department, the Urban Institute’s National Center for Charitable Statistics, the Oregon State Department of Revenue, and the commercial data source Claritas.

Why were these measures picked for the Creative Vitality Index?
The Creative Vitality Index comprises data that were selected for four core reasons:
1) they are pre-existing and do not require the collection of additional data;
2) they are available in the form of annual updates;
3) they can be easily compared across states and in regions within states; and
4) experts have determined that they are reliable.
The index includes two major components: one measures seven indicators of community participation in the arts, and the other measures concentrations of arts-related employment.
The participation indicators include items such as “income of nonprofit organizations,” which incorporates contributions and tickets, reflecting participation. Other indicators are per-capita sales of musical instruments and music supply stores. Because both professional and amateur musicians buy from these stores, the sales data capture the expenditures of similar yet diverse customers, including high school students, members of garage bands, and professional jazz musicians. Traditional economic impact studies do not include this type of information.
The second data stream in the index measures arts-related employment. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides a framework for states to conduct surveys that count and categorize individuals into occupational categories, including those related to the creative economy. The occupational detail is reported according to Workforce Development Areas (WDA), which are artificial but often geographically rational segmentations of a state. The data from the WDAs can be broken down to reflect cities, counties, or other geographic and political subdivisions. Like the measure of participation, the jobs included in the Creative Vitality Index were selected to represent key work activities in the creative economy.

What the Creative Vitality Index does and doesn’t measure
The Creative Vitality Index is not an index of raw creativity. The Creative Vitality Index captures the economic dimension of creative activity in an economy, not the creative potential of individuals.
The Creative Vitality Index does not measure economic activity in the area of the technology sector. While the developers of the index believe there

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# Building the Creative Vitality Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National (Baseline) Creative Vitality Index</th>
<th>Oregon’s Creative Vitality Index</th>
<th>Multnomah, Washington Counties Creative Vitality Index</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>2.27</td>
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Data collected from seven sources of community participation as well as arts-related employment information create the framework for the Creative Vitality Index.

Oregon ranks slightly higher than the national average (1.00) in the Creative Vitality Index.
Creative Vitality in Oregon

is a strong connection between the creative sector and the technology sector, the economic dynamics of the technology sector are outside of the scope of the Creative Vitality Index.

The Creative Vitality Index does not measure self-employment or online transactions (i.e., purchasing music or books online). Regular collection of this data simply does not occur. Since this information is not collected in other states where the Creative Vitality Index has been implemented, it does not put Oregon at a disadvantage—we are comparing apples to apples, not apples to oranges.

The Creative Vitality Index favors participation and employment in the nonprofit arts. Defining the creative sector as a continuum that ranges from the nonprofit arts through related for-profit activities, the index seeks to capture a wide range of arts-related activities.

The Creative Vitality Index can be used as a tool for comparison; however, its greatest power is its ability to inform a self-diagnosis process, and contribute to the design of an improvement plan.

A state or community’s index rating should be understood in the context of an economy’s size and trading position. For example, a community with a relatively small population that is not a trading center may continually have a relatively modest Creative Vitality Index rating. It may need to grow in different ways to even have the potential to expand its Creative Vitality Index.

Is it an economic impact study?

No. Indexes that measure creativity and arts economic impact studies both address the need to confirm the positive and contributing role of the arts in an economy. However, traditional economic impact studies only focus on the number of people employed in the nonprofit arts sector, direct and indirect spending related to the arts, and the multiplier effect on community impact (e.g., money spent on restaurants and hotels).

The Creative Vitality Index moves beyond this model and seeks to: 1) define the nonprofit arts as part of a variety of interrelated creative activities that begin with the nonprofit arts and extend to the for-profit arts; and 2) provide an estimate of the relative health of the creative economy in an area.

The Creative Vitality Index can exist alongside an economic impact study of the arts. The two complement one another by taking different approaches to address similar issues, but they report on different facts.

Oregon’s Creative Vitality

The baseline score for the Creative Vitality Index is 1.00, which is the national score using the same data streams used locally. A region’s score reflects a value relative to this national baseline; a score of 1.00 or greater means that the area has a relatively strong arts sector.

Oregon’s Creative Vitality Index score for 2006 was 1.12, slightly higher than the national average. Among the sub-indexes that make up the larger index, Oregon scores high in book and record sales per capita (1.44) as well as in music supply sales (1.23). The state is near the 1.00 national benchmark in most other measures in the community participation section. At .95, Oregon’s occupational employment in creative sectors is slightly lower than the national average.

While figures from one or two years can show us where we stand relative to the national baseline, the true application of the Creative Vitality Index is in reflecting change from year to year in a given study area. Over the coming years, the index will serve as a tool to track the evolution of Oregon’s creative sector and help maintain its strength and liveliness.

How can the Creative Vitality Index be used in my community?

The Creative Vitality Index can inform the public policy decision-making process and support advocates who seek to further develop the creative economy. Having established a baseline with the 2006 Creative Vitality Index, which reported on 2005 data, a community can see improvements, or declines, and encourage policy changes in the appropriate areas.

Other uses include:

• Calling attention to and educating the community at large on the varied components of the creative economy.
• Promoting the concept that the creative economy includes both for-profit and nonprofit arts-related activities.
• Bringing attention to significant changes in the creative economy ecosystem. For example, if contributions from private foundations drop substantially in a year and three local theater groups close their doors, it’s time for action.
• Acting as a framework upon which to define and build a coalition to support and expand the creative economy.
• Serving as a tool to annually measure changes in the creative economy.

Where else has the Creative Vitality Index been performed?

Currently, you can find Creative Vitality Index data for Oregon and Washington, and the cities of Seattle and Denver. Other states, including Utah and New Mexico, are in the process of collecting data.
The Creative Vitality Index is based on national average of 1.0. Indexes above 1.0 are above average; below 1.0 is less than the national average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WDA 1 Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook Counties</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 2 Multnomah and Washington Counties</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 3 Marion, Polk and Yamhill Counties</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 4 Benton, Lincoln and Linn Counties</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 5 Lane County</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 6 Douglas County</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 7 Coos and Curry Counties</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 8 Jackson and Josephine Counties</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 9 Gilliam, Hood River, Sherman, Wheeler and Wasco Counties</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 10 Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson Counties</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 11 Klamath and Lake Counties</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 12 Morrow and Umatilla Counties</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 13 Baker, Union and Wallowa Counties</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 14 Grant, Harney and Malheur Counties</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDA 15 Clackamas County</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon State</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Against a national baseline of 1.00, Oregon's counties, measured in Workforce Development Areas (WDA), ranked from 2.27 to .53 in the Creative Vitality Index for 2006.

Source: WESTAF, 2007
CREATIVE REVOLUTION IN THE SHADOW OF THE FREMONT BRIDGE

Technology and storytelling go hand in hand—always have. Now, interactive computer technology offers the power to turn listeners and readers into participants in a way storytellers of an earlier age never imagined.

Perhaps nowhere is that power harnessed more creatively than in an airy loft at the north end of Portland’s Fremont Bridge. Here, innovative two-way storytelling has helped make Second Story Interactive Studios a national leader in its field and a key player in Portland’s creative economy.

In interactive media, the story flows in two directions rather than one. “We provide the characters, the stage, music, information, imagery and atmosphere that visitors use to weave their own story,” explains Brad Johnson, who founded and runs the company with wife Julie Beeler. “The narrative is only visible in hindsight, when we piece together the visitor’s path—the path that was their history, their story.” That, says Johnson, is the second story.

It’s a process that, as the Oregonian pointed out in a 2007 article, “fuses databases, artifacts, animation, Web technology, video, text, and breathtaking graphics” in a marriage of creativity and technological know-how. Second Story’s excellence at both sides of the equation has been put to work for such clients as National Geographic, PBS, the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Getty Museum, and many others.

Its work is on display throughout the lobby of Portland Center Stage’s Gerding Theater at the repurposed Armory Building. The interactive exhibits here include a “Historiscope” kiosk of the armory’s history, which connects past to present by hiding modern technology inside an outer shell suggesting an earlier age. With archival pictures accessible in a fun way, Johnson explains, the building attains a new kind of meaning for people.

Johnson, a painter and self-taught computer programmer, launched himself into the interactive world in 1994, just as museums and cultural organizations were beginning to embrace content-rich CD-ROMs and Web technology. He created a tongue-in-cheek multimedia mailer for a fictional clothespin manufacturer as a demo piece.

The piece caught attention, and soon he was creating interpretive media for national clients. In the course of an early project, he met Beeler, an art director at a Berkeley design firm. Two years later, they were partners in marriage and business. By 1997, with the dot-com explosion in full bloom, the Bay Area was proving too expensive for the type of projects and nonprofit budgets they sought. “Our clients were national and it didn’t really matter where we were,” says Johnson, “so we thought we’d go where we wanted to be.”

“We wanted a smaller city that still had a creative community and a creative hub,” Beeler adds. That turned out to be Portland, where she’d been born and raised. “We really loved Portland. It was a different city from what I had left in 1987.”

Second Story Interactive occupies the top floor of a renovated industrial warehouse it owns in partnership with Grand Central Baking in North Portland. The 10,000 square-foot space contains work areas for staff, a screening room, and a technology lab.
With their industry and the creative economy both in infancy at that time, the local talent pool was shallow and recruiting from outside was a challenge. It’s far different now, with creative types from all over either already in Portland or looking for the opportunity to move there. Company income is in the range of $4 million a year, a large proportion of which pays the salaries of a close-knit team of 20 writers, artists, designers, animators, and programmers. Another half dozen specialists work on a contract or project basis.

A visitor observing the quiet bustle from every corner of the cheery studio in North Portland can’t help but be optimistic about the enduring power of storytelling and the ability of technology to keep it current and relevant to our lives.

“Certainly,” says Brad Johnson, “the Internet has created a new kind of consciousness with people who demand to have more and more control over their experiences in life. And I think businesses are creating more unconventional ways to engage people.”

“What we love to do,” adds Julie Beeler, “is educate a visitor, use technology in different ways with bite-size nuggets. I love seeing kids get inspired by some subject that they knew nothing about. Maybe they’re finding themselves at the library or talking to their parents or going on the Internet and wanting to get more.”

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**Visible Proofs: Forensic Views of the Body** was developed for the National Library of Medicine, the world’s largest medical library on the campus of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. The show explores the significant cases, technologies and people that have had an impact on the history of forensic medicine. Second Story developed all the video installations, an interactive autopsy slab, and other interactives as well as a companion Website. An examination table, shown here, serves as a projection screen where groups can discover how an autopsy is performed by medically trained pathologists.

**Employment in Occupations Related to Multimedia Production**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation (in Oregon)</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art Directors</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editors</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>1149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic Designers</td>
<td>1,966</td>
<td>2,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Media Artists and Animators</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set and Exhibit Designers</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writers and Authors</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Being Creative with a Gun to Your Head’

Thousands of Oregonians live their lives at the crossroads of art and commerce, following careers that demand creativity in return for a paycheck. According to state employment department figures, 634 of them are professional photographers. Most focus on advertising, portraiture, weddings, architecture, and assorted commercial subjects. But a few are tasked with capturing the events that mark our lives.

“Photojournalism is not really a profession. It’s really a calling. The people who get into it, and who excel at it, are doing so because there’s something deep within them that compels them to do this.”

Those are the words of Rob Romig, director of graphics at the Eugene Register-Guard, Oregon’s second-largest newspaper and one of the few remaining medium-sized family-owned papers in the country. The paper has had a tradition of outstanding photojournalism since at least 1976, when Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Brian Lanker began building a photo department reflective of his stature as a two-time National Newspaper Photographer of the Year. No longer with the paper, Lanker now pursues editorial and advertising photography from his Eugene studio. His name and legacy still resonate, even with photographers who came after his tenure.

In 1999, the paper was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for its coverage of the shootings at Thurston High School in neighboring Springfield and has been a consistent winner in the prestigious Pictures of the Year competition. Four full-time photographers are on staff now, all sharing a common calling, yet each with a distinct personality that informs his approach and style.

Brian Davies, a staffer since 1999, is miles away from the Hollywood image of the pushy press shooter. He took his first photography class as a 20-year-old college student and then slipped into it as a career. A self-identified “private person,” the last thing he wanted to do was point a camera at a person. When I got into photojournalism and began to see the work other people were doing, I sensed the power of it,” he says.

His approach is reflective, a search for images that give insight on the human condition. “People are like onions, and as you get to know and trust a person to give you the inner part, that’s what you want to photograph.” It’s important to connect with the humanity, he believes. “That’s something that people don’t really understand” about the work of a newspaper photographer.

On the most basic level, photojournalists provide a set of eyes for the community in what is widely considered the first draft of history. Chris Pietsch, a Register-Guard photographer for 30 years, has a clear idea of what makes a great image. “A bunch of elements come together very quickly for the person to see the relevance of that picture, why it’s worth their time,” he says. “But then there’s also a moment of reflection when they’re stuck with it for a bit. They can’t let it go.”

The best photos provide a teaching moment, and it’s not only the community that learns, notes Kevin Clark, a photographer with the paper for five years and a photo editor for eight before that. “You can learn an awful lot, not just about others, but about yourself and your own life and how you can be better as well.”

Newspapers are one of the few places where a person can pull a paycheck as a staff photographer. Glamorous? Well, for every dramatic breaking story, there are hundreds of tight deadlines and assignments that challenge the creative side “in a really distressing way,” says Davies. “We do the same things over and over, we have to bring a new look to things an infinite number of times.”

Anybody can take a photograph, adds Pietsch, “but the guys who get paid for it are the ones that do it when absolutely everything’s working against your chance of pulling it off. That’s the pro.”

“It’s being creative with a gun to your head,” Davies concludes.

Photojournalists are creative, obviously. Does that make them artists as well? Pietsch, who’s been earning money at photography since junior high, takes a pragmatic view: “I don’t use photojournalism to create art,” he quotes a colleague, “but I use art to create journalism.” Photojournalism, he insists, “has to be relevant to people’s lives on some level, and for me, that’s the trick about what we do, in that you put it in...
newsprint that costs a lot of money and there’s a guy writing a check to you at the end of the week for your effort. At some point your success is being measured. We’re all sitting here at the Register-Guard because we’ve demonstrated an ability to be successful at that more often than not.”

“We aren’t encouraged to go out and be ‘artists,’” Davies agrees, “but the best work will intersect art in some way, will be an artistic expression of the moment. The best pictures I could make are going to be pictures that can be taken on a couple of levels, not just what you see.”

Some think the daily newspaper is a dying breed in the era of the Internet. “I don’t think the average person thinks what it would be like if we didn’t have newspapers,” Pietsch says, referring to the many roles they play in our lives. “The economic model is suffering at a time when we probably need [newspapers] more than ever.”

For Davies, the sense that “the best days in this business are behind us” is among the worst parts of the job. And the best? “It’s when you’re out watching people do what they normally do and they’re very comfortable with you being there and they’re doing something important or trivial, it really doesn’t matter. It’s just sort of the human history of today, whatever’s happening, whatever meaningless thing happens today is history tomorrow.”

www.registerguard.com

‘Wreck at the Pre’ is a Register-Guard news photo by Chris Pietsch. Pietsch’s image captured elite runners going down like dominos during a pileup in a women’s 1,500 meters race at the Prefontaine Classic in Eugene. Outstanding photojournalism is a Register-Guard tradition.

The newspaper’s photography team includes: photographers Wayne Eastburn, Brian Davies, Kevin Clark and Chris Pietsch; Paul Carter, assistant director of graphics/photography; and Rob Romig, director of graphics. Carl Davaz, former director of graphics, brings a visual background to his current position as deputy managing director.
**The Puppet Master of Broadway and Scappoose**

Giant wings of wood and metal flapping, the pterodactyl swooped down the streets of Greenwich Village like a demon that Halloween night in 1985. No one living had ever seen its like, including the noted theater designer John Napier. Impressed, Napier gave his card to the young man who had created the 48-pound pterodactyl and worn it for 13 hours that night. Born into a logging family in Grants Pass, Michael Curry was a sculptor who had graduated from what is now Pacific Northwest College of Art. After meeting with Napier, he had a six-figure contract and a new career. In a few short years, his designs for Disney’s *The Lion King* would help make him the puppet master of Broadway. In 1994, he moved his family and key staff to Oregon. Today, Michael Curry Design employs nearly 60 people at a 50,000 square-foot facility near Scappoose, working for worldwide clients like Disney, Cirque du Soleil and the Olympics. Recently he talked about his blending of art and technology and the demands of running a creative business in Oregon.

**What kind of a project most reflects the “Michael Curry Touch?”** I like a delicate, graceful and quite beautiful approach. I’m more interested in poetry than I am in shock and spectacle. If I’ve been able to contribute anything, it’s the complete feature of the human body. It’s the motor at the heart of this thing, and not secondary. So I don’t make all the features of a puppet’s face move. I allow the puppeteers to move those features themselves.

You’re an Oregon native, a graduate of Pacific Northwest College of Art. What brought you back to Oregon in 1994?

We were going to raise a family. My wife and I had been in New York and done quite well. I actually thought I was going to go back to the studio and start sculpting again. Then I was offered to be a lead consultant on all things *Lion King*. So I did open a studio here and since then I haven’t had a day off. I work a lot in Asia, and Europe, so Oregon is not a bad center to be from. You have a staff of almost 60 here. We like that size, it’s a size that still gives us enough power to do the big jobs. Every one of them, with the exception of a few, are full-time employees. I think between six and seven years is the average that each one of these people has been with me. So there’s very little turnover. They get to know my work and my aesthetic and it makes my job a lot easier. What we’re making here is very custom, so it takes a lot of head-scratching. Half of my company is from the fine arts. You learn craft, you learn dedication to skills, form. The other thing that’s very different about Oregon is that the quality of craftsmanship and artistry is very high here.

You’ve basically trained your staff. We prefer that. It’s another advantage of having long-term employees. We have an even blend of college-educated artists and people who have never had an artistic background but are now working in a strong artistic environment. To see them grow and become culturally aware of art is really exciting. We have welders working next to seamstresses, and I have welders who can sew. And I have fabric people who can weld. We have sculpture, fabric, our mechanical group, and what we call composite, that’s the making of all the rubber and the fiberglass, and then design. It’s a very social, tight-knit group. You may be the most brilliant artist, but if you don’t work in the team, it’s another story.

You’re incorporating a whole variety of other skills that one wouldn’t think of as belonging to an arts-oriented company. We use metallurgists and mechanical engineers from all around Portland. We send our metal to be cured by...
Creatures of the wild imagination populate the shop at Michael Curry Design, home to a dozen projects at any given time. Hollow frames of carbon fiber and Kevlar make the puppets lightweight enough for acrobatics, yet strong enough to withstand multiple performances a week.

Photos courtesy Michael Curry Design

This giant bear and dozens of other puppet animals by Michael Curry Design helped open the 2003 Olympics. This was the first major world event after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

www.michaelcurrydesign.com

a heat-treating company that normally does motorcycles and bicycles, and we try to use as many outside services as we can in Oregon.

What about the economic impact in Columbia County? We’re proud that we’re one of the star businesses out here and that our proceeds to our employees are much higher than the average in this county. This year we’ll do six or seven million dollars in gross income. We have people making six figures; there’s nobody here on minimum wage, that’s for sure. We offer a medical insurance program that’s very progressive. Since we’ve been in Oregon, we’ve produced about $53 million worth of revenues coming into the state. We’re pretty proud of that.

What about recent projects like the work for Eugene Ballet? Ken Kesey wrote a children’s story called Little Tricker before he died, and I designed a giant 16-foot tall bear puppet that the ballet dancers manipulate; it’s very beautiful. I’m more involved than people think with local arts groups. I’m on the board of Northwest Academy. My company gives quite progressively to not-for-profits like PNCA, White Bird, and Portland Institute for Contemporary Art.

What’s the key to running a successful creative business in Oregon? Quality and consistency. More so out here than in other places. There has to be a reason for people to reach a little farther for you. The other Oregon thing is to look outside of Oregon for your market. Our brand has tremendous appeal to people. There’s a quality, there’s an equity to just saying you’re from here.

Clients like to come out here. They love Portland food and hotels and Powell’s books, and it’s a fantastic place to visit. Everybody’s aware of our liberal, live-and-let-live approach to things. Oregon should market itself for what it represents. It has a brand that is indelible.

What’s in the future for Michael Curry Design? It’s already happening. I’m doing a lot of directing, writing, and more high concept consulting. You pray for 20 years to have the clout and the projects and the freedom I now have, and I’m really going to enjoy it.
“Can we talk after dark?” Jeanne Carver asks an interviewer. It’s January, lambing season, and on the high Columbia Plateau outside Shaniko, the animals come first. The animals and the land. The animals, the land and the health of a family-run operation with roots deep in Oregon’s heritage.

The story she tells two nights later, lambs now sheltered from an Eastern Oregon snowstorm, opens in 1871. That year, a 19-year-old named Richard Hinton began ranching sheep on a homestead claim in Wasco County. By 1900, running a new breed of Columbia sheep crossbred to produce both lambs and wool, his Imperial Stock Ranch was on its way to becoming Oregon’s largest individual owner of land and stock.

Fast forward to the 1990s. Dan and Jeanne Carver, who bought the ranch in 1988, have made it a model of sustainable agriculture. “We’re a dry-land operation,” says Jeanne Carver. There’s no irrigation and no tilling. “Our cattle and sheep range out year round, eating what Mother Nature provides. We call it a sunlight cycle.” A healthy, diverse landscape captures sunlight, converts it to vegetable matter. Grazing animals convert vegetation into food, and then revitalize the earth with natural fertilizer. ... and so it goes.

But the landscape of sheep ranching was changing, and by 1999, the Carvers faced a hard decision. Over a four-year span, off-shore competition had claimed 26,000 U.S. sheep producers, along with nearly all the country’s production/processing infrastructure. The choice was blunt: Create their own markets or banish sheep from a ranch that had flourished with lamb and wool production for more than a century.

“We had a heritage of American-breed sheep, an Oregon story, a ranch on the National Register of Historic Places. We felt the need to preserve it, to be stewards of that.”

The solution, they decided, might lie in direct farm-to-consumer marketing. In the case of lamb, that meant working directly with chefs and select markets to provide a high-quality, sustainably and humanely produced, Oregon product at fair prices that also happen to reflect local- and slow-food philosophies.

The historic shearing shed at Imperial Stock Ranch headquarters has been used annually for about 100 years. Andy Zettle (foreground) has been shearing here for 20 years.

Today the ranch contracts with 15-plus designers, knitters, crocheters, weavers, dyers, hand felters, seamstresses, and at least one watercolorist, who work in both woolen and lambskin fashions. The Carvers commission as much as 80 to 90 percent of their work, and the artisans specify their own rates.

The Northwest has a reputation for quality in the design and production of textile arts, a logical fit with the local sourcing, natural process, and hand-made quality valued at the ranch. By joining Central Oregon Spinners & Weavers, Jeanne made contact with skilled artisans in the forefront of an increasingly vital traditional crafts sector.

Jean Lampe, a Bend-based knitwear designer, teacher and author with a national following, signed on to create designs for a series of knitwear kits. The ranch then contracted with Oregon-based textile artists to create custom-ordered fabrics and garments, ranging from scarves, hats and wraps, to sweaters, vests and jackets. Then, says Jeanne Carver, “I began to think we should have some ready-to-wear clothing that I could put in a few shops.”

Today the ranch contracts with 15-plus designers, knitters, crocheters, weavers, dyers, hand felters, seamstresses, and at least one watercolorist, who work in both woolen and lambskin fashions. The Carvers commission as much as 80 to 90 percent of their work, and the artisans specify their own rates.

In 2005, the ready-to-wear line found a powerful advocate in Norm Thompson Outfitters, who saw the garments as a means to showcase sustainability in a
“It’s like you created a dream of what you wanted to see,” said president John Emrick, “and then finding a product with a story to tell, and whose values matched up with our values.”

Today, Imperial Stock Ranch clothing products are sold in gift and fabric shops across the region and nationwide through Norm Thompson stores and catalogs, helping spread the message of such Oregon values as sustainability, regional pride and love of the land. Other national and international clothing companies as well as boutiques are showing interest.

Demonstrating the merit of value-added enterprise, the garment line brings in 15 times the profit made even during the best of the pre-1999 years, when the ranch was able to sell its entire wool clip to local processors at top prices. The program serves as a model and source of income for a growing number of other ranchers, who are finding with the Carvers a domestic market for their own products.

Besides the artisans themselves, there’s plenty of creativity to highlight in this story. It extends easily to people like the Carvers, who had the imagination to seek out compatible, if unlikely, partners in the name of sustainability and survival in a sometimes unforgiving landscape.

www.imperialstockranch.com
ZAP! POW!

MAJOR FILM FESTIVAL LANDS IN PORTLAND

To a person of a certain age, the word “animation” may conjure memories of Saturday mornings spent in front of the TV. Escape the pull of nostalgia, though, and it’s clear that animation has moved far beyond children’s programming. Animation is everywhere today, from social satire on TV, to Oscar-winning feature films, to installations on gallery walls, to experimental shorts all over the Internet - even on our cell phones.

The only thing animation has lacked, it seems, was a major U.S. festival; there was one in Ottawa, Ontario, but nothing near the major animation centers on the West Coast.

That changed in 2007, when the first-ever Platform International Animation Festival made Portland the center of the animation universe in late June. Animators from around the world flocked in for a week-long series of premieres and retrospectives, screenings, guest speakers, exhibitions, workshops, and networking opportunities.

“Portland is hosting more celebrated filmmakers than it ever has at any one time,” wrote Oregonian film critic Shawn Levy.

The festival was the brainchild of Irene Kotlarz, a 20-year animation industry veteran who has held executive positions in festivals in England and the U.S. and is a sought-after writer and teacher in the field. The few established festivals, she knew, were run on a model from the ‘60s and ‘70s. “They’re really not taking account of new developments,” she says. “The Internet is having a profound effect on everything. It’s clinging to a 20th century model if you base the festival just on films in the theater.”

Her festival would break the pattern, reaching out to embrace new media platforms spanning the worlds of art and entertainment. But where to hold it? A festival in L.A. or San Francisco might get lost in the crush. In mid-sized Portland, however, Platform could make a splash.

Oregon’s animated past and present:

- **Woody Woodpecker:** Mel Blanc, man of 1,000 voices, honed his talent at Portland’s Lincoln High.
- **Closed Mondays:** Will Vinton and Bob Gardiner won the Oscar for best animated short in 1975. It led to Claymation and Will Vinton Studios.
- **Plymptoons:** Portland-born Bill Plympton is famous for weird films and drawing every frame himself.
- **Brad Bird:** Before the Oscars for The Incredibles and Ratatouille, he was a Corvallis student.
- **The Simpsons:** Bart’s real dad is Portland native Matt Groening.

Platform International Animation Festival graphics.
Animation artists who call Portland home include Laura di Trapani, Joan C. Gratz, Joanna Priestley and Jim Blashfield, whose works get screened at festivals and on TV screens across the globe. Dozens more work freelance or on staff for a growing flurry of local firms doing national film and commercial work, including Laika, the former Will Vinton Studios; Bent Image Lab, a studio created by film veterans Chel White, Ray DiCarlo and David Daniels; and FFAKE, a production company formed by former Laika president Paul Golden.

In Situ, a public, multi-channel animated installation by Portland animator Rose Bond, premiered in multiple windows of the Pearl District’s historic Maytag building during the inaugural platform International Animation Festival held in Portland in June 2007.

Photo: courtesy Rose Bond

Snapshot: Animation Artist Rose Bond

Rose Bond lives and works in Portland, where she also teaches animation and time-based arts at Pacific Northwest College of Art. “In Situ,” her animated installation set in multiple windows of the Pearl District’s historic Maytag building, premiered at Animation Inside Out during the 2007 Platform International Animation Festival. Writing of a similar project in 2004, the Oregonian noted: “Bond turned an Old Town building into a luminous work of art that literally glowed with dancing images … car traffic stopped, crowds assembled in the middle of the street, and rapt silence prevailed on the night it opened.”

Installation takes animation beyond the movie house. It’s a hybrid form—one that remixes drawing, projection, and place. At the juncture of traditional animation, fine art, and public space, the public can expect media that entertains as well as provokes.

—Rose Bond describing plans for the 2007 Animation Inside Out competition

sometimes disturbing works that involved projected animated films,” critic Shawn Levy wrote. “How was it? Stunning.”

For Irene Kotlarz, the 2007 festival was a good warm-up act, with plenty of room for growth as it matures. “The standard of the films was very good,” she says. “We had over 2,000 films entered for the competition. Festivals that have been going for 30 years don’t get much more than that.”

More than 800 people bought passes for the entire festival and 8,000 more bought tickets to individual events. “For a first festival, that was OK. I think it will double next time.” Kotlarz says. “People did fly in from all over the world, but not so many locals.”

That’s likely to change next time around, based on high praise from critics and animators for both the festival and the city. Portland will host the second installment of the Platform International Animation Festival in June 2009.

Singular visions

Animation artists who call Portland home include Laura di Trapani, Joan C. Gratz, Joanna Priestley and Jim Blashfield, whose works get screened at festivals and on TV screens across the globe. Dozens more work freelance or on staff for a growing flurry of local firms doing national film and commercial work, including Laika, the former Will Vinton Studios; Bent Image Lab, a studio created by film veterans Chel White, Ray DiCarlo and David Daniels; and FFAKE, a production company formed by former Laika president Paul Golden.

www.platformfestival.com
www.pnca.edu
www.rosebond.com
CATCHING ARTISTS AT WORK IN THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Oregon Employment Department statistics show that 214 Oregonians were employed full time as fine artists in 2006. The CVI as an index doesn’t count artists and designers who are self-employed or work on a freelance basis, so that figure doesn’t measure the hundreds who spend at least part of their waking hours making art. The Oregon landscape is in fact a giant gallery district peppered with hundreds of studios where artists create works of stunning variety.

In Oregon and elsewhere, artists and communities have learned that opening those studios to the public is an excellent way to draw visitors to those settings to buy art in the place it’s made. Three open studio tours show that such events can be effective in rural settings, small towns, and cities.

Art Harvest Studio Tour of Yamhill County

In 1992, a handful of Yamhill County artists circulated a flyer inviting people to visit their studios dotted across the countryside. “The purpose was to get people comfortable with viewing art and aware of creative people in their county,” says Susan Day, a participant since 1997 and co-chair for three of its early years. Since then, “Yamhill County has exploded in the arts, and people are very aware of it.”

Now, three dozen artists open their studios for two weekends each October for the Art Harvest Studio Tour. Some 3,000 full-color tour maps find their way into the hands of several thousand visitors looking to see and buy art where it’s made.

“The surprise for me,” says Marilyn Worrix, an artist who creates one-of-a-kind and small edition artist books, “was the huge number of people who come from outside our area.” The tour typically brings more than 1,000 visitors to her studio in the restored Elks Lodge in McMinnville’s downtown historic district. In one way or another - direct sales, commissions, class sign-ups - she estimates that being part of the tour accounts for “probably 75 percent” of her annual business.

Back roads and small towns have their own appeal. Susan Day’s vivid landscapes draw hundreds to her Yamhill studio, helping her earn a living totally through art sales and teaching. The tour, she says, “catapulted me. My success comes from being able to show my work locally in this venue.”

Art Harvest has been successful for 16 years because it’s worked for the artists, of course, but also because it creates opportunity for the public. While galleries can seem intimidating, a studio visit is somehow friendly, says Day. “It’s personal, they get to meet the artist and talk to them. As artists, we’re excited to have people see our work and to be talking about it.”

Portland Open Studios

Arts education in the broadest sense is the defining theme of Portland Open Studios. Established in 1992, the tour showcases 96 artists throughout the city for two weekends each October. “We love it when you buy stuff, but this is not an obligation,” says Bonnie Melzer, a Portland artist who also serves as the event’s PR coordinator. “We are artists at work, and we see ourselves as an arts educational arm.”

Since 2005, Portland Open Studios has awarded scholarships for participation to young artists committed to art as their life’s work. Blake van Roekel, an early scholarship recipient, has a studio in Portland’s ActivSpace on NW Lovejoy, a refurbished industrial building divided into individual artist’s working spaces. A product of Trillium Artisan’s business development training, she markets her own line of handcrafted glass jewelry to galleries and boutiques across the country. Opening studios to the public, she says, “is crucial to encouraging people to appreciate the arts so they really understand the process.”

“Actually,” Meltzer agrees, “we’re ambassadors for the arts and it’s a very intimate view because people tromp through your back yard.”

Gorge Artists Open Studios Tour

The first Gorge Artists Open Studios tour took place in April 2007, when 36 artists on both sides of the Columbia River opened their workspaces to visitors from as far away as Seattle, Salem and Joseph.
An estimated 800 people took the tour over its two days, better than expected for a first effort.

Attendance is only one measure of success, however. “It’s a balancing act,” says John Maher, a Mosier artist and marketing manager for the tour. “We want a one-on-one situation where whoever comes in can actually talk to the artist.”

The tour traces its beginnings to 2005, when the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District identified the arts as one of the region’s five emerging economic growth clusters, along with wine, renewable energy, natural healthcare and high technology. In 2006, arts leaders created the open studios tour as a means to “create a new direct-marketing opportunity for the region’s artists.” The Oregon Cultural Trust awarded the tour a grant in 2007, aware of the potential to support arts and tourism in the region.

Buying art is not usually an impulse purchase, and this is not just a weekend sale, says Maher. “It’s a leg in our marketing chair, a way to stimulate interest, to create new lists of potential customers.”

After its first-year success, the tour attracted increased sponsorships and funding. These included a key grant to fund marketing staff and materials from the Oregon Investment Board, the entity that administers the Oregon Economic Development Plan on the Oregon side of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

“Gorge Artists began with the mission to create the Columbia River Gorge as an arts destination,” Maher says. “People were so happy with it last year, it’s allowed the business sponsorships to go way up.” Maher believes the reason is clear. “They feel it’s good for the culture of the community.”
Oregon’s Creative Occupations

The Occupational Index of the Arts, which is 40% of the state’s total Creative Vitality Index rating, compares the concentrations of arts-related employment at the state and local levels with the nation as a whole. In 2006, there were a total of 23,841 jobs in arts-related occupations, according to the Oregon State Department of Employment Security current database. The majority, 14,759 jobs, were classified as “primary arts” occupations. The remaining 9,082 jobs are classified as “secondary arts” occupations.

The 2006 Oregon State Occupational Index of 1.01 indicates that the state has a slightly better than average level of arts-related employment activity as compared to the nation as a whole and arts-related employment increased at a greater rate than the nation from 2005 to 2006 as the Index moved from 0.95 to 1.01. WDA 2 (Multnomah and Washington Counties) was the most vibrant region, with an Index of 1.74.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Occupations</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects, Except</td>
<td>1771</td>
<td>1756</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape and Naval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art Directors</td>
<td>124</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choreographers</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>382</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial and Industrial Designers</td>
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<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dancers</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>1149</td>
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<tr>
<td>Designers, All Other</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>793</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editors</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2438</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fashion Designers</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>656</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Artists, Including</td>
<td>660</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painters, Sculptors, and Illustrators</td>
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<td>604</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-Media Artists and Animators</td>
<td>287</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music Directors and Composers</td>
<td>705</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photographers</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>634</td>
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<td>Producers and Directors</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>818</td>
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<td>Radio and Television Announcers</td>
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<td>Set and Exhibit Designers</td>
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<td>Technical Writers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertising and Promotions Managers</td>
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<td>684</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agents and Business Managers of Artists, Performers, and Athletes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audio and Video Equipment Technicians</td>
<td>627</td>
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<td>Broadcast Technicians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camera Operators, Television, Video, and Motion Picture</td>
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<td>Directors, Religious</td>
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<td>Activities and Education</td>
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<td>Film and Video Editors</td>
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<td>Librarians</td>
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<td>Media and Communication</td>
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<td>Equipment Workers, All Other</td>
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<td>Musical Instrument</td>
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<td>Repairers and Tuners</td>
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<td>Public Relations Specialists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sound Engineering Technicians</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20,729</td>
<td>23,841</td>
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