

## Rick Gregg, an original

BY PAUL HAIST

**R**ick Gregg is a man of few words. He's an artist, a sculptor, and he has been for virtually all his life, even since before he knew it.

His sculptures stand apart for a signature quality that—across a body of work that exemplifies the word diverse—is immediately recognizable.

“While every sculpture stands alone, each carries his blood and breathes with the life he has given it, so that even someone who had not seen his work for years would know it was a Rick Gregg original.”

That's how Portland sculptor Carole Murphy describes the work of her

longtime best friend.

“His fellow sculptors realize this, even without discussion. It is simply known,” she said. “Rick's ability to pull the right color, the perfect angle, just the right turn and bend from his work while adhering to excellence throughout his art leaves us standing with our mouths open.”

While a reporter may have to pry a few words out of Gregg, his art speaks volumes and does so with a distinguished eloquence.

But then, he's had a lot of practice across a life that has been a self-directed voyage of discovery. Gregg's journey into the world of art began with a little serendipity and a

See **GREGG**, page 6



Paul Haist Photo

**SCULPTOR RICK GREGG** in his studio with “Pearl,” a work that demonstrates his skill with skip welding, which he used here to create the woman's flowing tresses.

## Ceramic installation tested engineering skills

BY LEE CHAMBERS

**T**hree years ago when my artist-wife Nancy Thorne Chambers began sculpting her installation “A Story Place,” I had no idea what a challenge the endeavor would become.

The project, at first just a few ceramic life-sized woodland animals being read to

by a ceramic girl, evolved quickly into a major effort that brought many challenges with it, both artistic and mechanical.

Creating ceramic trees six feet tall (with 1,500 ceramic leaves), many ceramic woodland ferns, ceramic books, stumps, a 120-pound bear, a pig, and two dozen other heavy critters, each challenged Nancy in many ways.

Inspiration she had aplenty, gleaned in part

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**NANCY THORNE CHAMBERS'** ceramic installation, “A Story Place,” became more than an artistic challenge.

## Pacific Northwest SCULPTORS

SE Hawthorne Blvd. #302  
Portland, OR 97214  
www.pnwsculptors.org

The *Pacific Northwest Sculptors Newsletter* is published bimonthly on each even-numbered month by the Pacific Northwest Sculptors, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the public through educational programs and sculpture exhibitions. We are a dynamic, inclusive community of artists who inspire and support each other's growth with ideas, skills and knowledge.

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Marlena Nielsen, 503-492-6226  
marlena.nielsen@frontier.net

### Website

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503-780-5257  
isa@isabellejohnston.com

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Deedra Rasmussen  
deedra.rasmussen@gmail.com

### Editorial Submissions:

Send to: newsletter@paulhaist.com

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# Board expansion, shows development top list Heath PNWS interim president

**AS** you probably already know, Carole Murphy has retired from the presidency of our group. We owe her a tremendous debt of thanks. She really took the job to heart and gave freely of her time. Now she will be able to focus on some exciting projects of her own, but I suspect we have not seen the last of Carole.

I am filling in at least until March when the board will elect officers. During that time, I plan to press for more board members, a substantial show committee and a situation such that being president does not entail an onerous time commitment.

Interesting opportunities present themselves and it can be hard to say no to a good thing. One could end up very quickly with far too much to do.

That is where a big board can come in handy. We currently have a board of eight. A board of 12 would give us a little breathing room where board person-hours are concerned. It would

## President's MESSAGE



GEORGE HEATH

also expand the board's range of skill sets. That in turn makes it easier to enthusiastically take advantage of such opportunities as come our way, rather than with a sense of toil.

As part of the solution we will be asking individual members to attend at least one board meeting a year. Members who have attended a board meeting often come back.

In addition, we are seeking a few board members from the community at large. An arts educator or a gallery owner would be a good fit

One area where we need more volunteer power is in the realm of shows and exhibitions. We all want to show our work. I'd like to see a sizable show committee. There again is that manpower issue.

The Northwest has an abundance of galleries, museums and art shows, large and small. All these venues need to be looked at in regard to their potential. Sculpture is not cheap. It is not a casual purchase. Where is best then? Which venue? Are sales the main consideration or is it visibility and fostering relationships with art buyers? A sizable show committee could take on these issues and get PNWS and our members some visibility.

Board Member Julian Voss-Andreae hosted a meeting Jan. 22 at which we began to build that show committee. About 25 people attended. The discussion focused on shows and volunteering. At least six people signed up to continue to take part in developing show opportunities. I suspect more will come on this important topic at our annual meeting on Feb. 20., 6:30 p.m. at Marty Eichinger's studio (address in Meetings box on this page).

If you only attend one meeting a year, make it this one. It's a hoot.

I am honored to be chosen as president, even if it is only for a brief period. I'm pleased to say Carole has left a fine running machine.

Thanks to All,  
George Heath

## Upcoming PNWS Member Meetings

### February Meeting

Elections, Potluck  
Hosted by Marty Eichinger  
Friday, Feb. 20, 6:30 p.m.  
2516 SE Division St.  
Portland, OR 97202  
503-784-9092  
www.EichingerSculpture

### March Meeting

Potluck  
Hosted by Dave Gonzales  
Friday, March 20, 7 p.m.  
10008 SE Ramona  
Portland, OR 97266  
503-270-9394  
www.GonzoIronInsanity.com

Feb. 25 at OMSI

# Celebrate Ken Patton and his Mesmerometer

BY SUSAN SCHIMELFINING

A multi-faceted, years-long labor of love is near completion. Ken Patton's compelling kinetic sculpture, The Mesmerometer, will soon have its own glass case to be publically accessible and prominently displayed at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in Portland.

Its placement strengthens the marriage of art and science and is a moving tribute to the creative process.

As artists, we aspire to put our heart and soul into our work. The actual achievement of such a fantastical feat is particularly poignant after an artist's death.

Although I never met Ken, preparing this article gave me a chance to see how incredibly loved and appreciated he was. Watching the Mesmerometer's movement conveys that transfer of energy right along with the potential

*Writer Susan Schimelfining is a metal sculptor and PNWS member.*



**THE MESMEROMETER**, at left, a kinetic sculpture by the late PNWS member Ken Patton, goes on permanent display in February at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in Portland. At right, Patton works on the central housing of the Mesmerometer.

and kinetic.

At the time of his death in December 2011 at the age of 60, Ken had been creating kinetic sculpture and other art full-time for 4½ years, after his well-planned retirement. He spent more than a year of that time on The Mesmerometer.

Ken's engineering career

necessitated his proficiency with auto-CAD (computer assisted design). This then allowed him to bring to life the balanced fluidity of his kinetic sculptures that speak so highly of the inner workings of his creativity. In his words that accompany the OMSI display...

*"The Mesmerometer is a fantastical gauge that measures the level of mesmerization in a room full of steampunk\* aficionados. It requires a trained mesmerologist to accurately read the gauges."*

— Ken Patton

... viewers are invited by OMSI to imagine and create.

Ken's love of the creative

process was contagious and is evident in the strong friendships he inspired. The persistence of such friends, along with the gracious generosity of his wife, Diaonne Bradley, made it possible for the Mesmerometer to have its home at OMSI. Marty Eichinger and Kirk deFord,

Ken's comrades in art and kayaking, worked extensively with OMSI's Melony Beard, Kate Sams and Dave Ingwood to make it all happen. Lyn Simon,

Ken's friend and metal work mentor, worked with OMSI

See **PATTON**, back cover



**PNWS MEMBERS** David "Gonzo" Gonzalez, left, and Rick Gregg, above, constructed the steel and glass case that will house the Mesmerometer at OMSI.

*\*Steampunk is an inspired movement of creativity and imagination. With a backdrop of either Victorian England or America's Wild West at hand, modern technologies are re-imagined and realized as elaborate works of art, fashion and mechanics. If Jules Verne or H.G. Wells were writing their science fiction today, it would be considered "steampunk."*

Source: MinistryOfPeculiarOccurrences.com

# PNWS books prime Portland art window

## Street-level, high-traffic no commission, no fee

Prime street-level window display space in downtown Portland will be made available at no charge to members of Pacific Northwest Sculptors for four weeks in July, according to PNWS Shows Coordinator David "Gonzo" Gonzalez.

Gonzalez booked the space recently after learning of its availability from PNWS member Rosemary Tobiga. Tobiga is training as a volunteer with the Oregon Potters Association, which has managed the window space for the past 10 years. Tobiga will work with Candace Wilson who has managed the windows for the past two years.

The three long windows are located

along Southwest Madison Street just east of its intersection with Second Avenue. Gonzalez described the locale as a high-traffic area and noted that other artists have made sales by using the space. Madison Street is the eastbound approach to the Hawthorne Bridge.

"The artwork is for sale with no commission on what is sold," said Gonzalez. "One-hundred percent goes to the artist. When something sells, the buyer can contact the artist directly with the information displayed in the window."

Artists using the space are responsible for installing and uninstalling the display. Gonzalez cautioned that no insurance is provided, but added that there is no history of items on display being lost, stolen or damaged. He also added that artists retain the option to self-insure.

Tobiga recommended that artists avoid selecting items for the window that cannot withstand high heat or extended exposure to sun.

Speculating on the prospect that many PNWS members may be interested in the opportunity, Gonzalez said, "If many people want to participate and I'm bombarded with interested sculptors, Rosemary and Candice will have to pick and choose who will be displayed."

Members interested in sharing the Justice Center windows should contact Gonzalez at [gonzo@gonzoironinsanity.com](mailto:gonzo@gonzoironinsanity.com) or Tobiga at [rtobiga@opalfirestudio.com](mailto:rtobiga@opalfirestudio.com)

"I think this is a great opportunity to spread the name of PNWS and the names and work of sculptors within the guild," said Gonzalez.

## Artists wanted

### Call for Sculptures

The San Juan Islands Sculpture Park is looking for work to sell.

Sculptors are invited to submit recent digital photographs of their work for possible selection.

Photographs will be reviewed in a blind jury process. Selection is based solely on the photographs as no other information is provided to jurors.

Since becoming an independent non-profit organization in 2012, San Juan Islands Sculpture Park sold more sculptures on behalf of artists in 2013 and 2014 than in all prior years combined since the founding of the park in 1998. Their visitor count in 2014 exceeded 30,000.

Complete details at [www.SJIsculpturepark.com](http://www.SJIsculpturepark.com)

### Portland Open Studios

Entry Deadline for the 17th annual Portland Open Studios tour is March 15.

POS is a juried studio tour of about 96 artists in the Portland metro area. They provide an opportunity for artists to open their studios to the public.

The tour is a ticketed event; attendees may purchase a printed Tour Guide Calendar, Map-Only ticket, smartphone app, or be personally

invited by the artist.

Details at [PortlandOpenStudios.com](http://PortlandOpenStudios.com).

### NACF Artist Fellowship

The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation seeks to recognize innovative American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian artists and culture makers across the country through the 2015 NACF Artist Fellowship, including support up to \$20,000 per artist.

Awards will be made in visual arts, performing arts, filmmaking, literature, music and traditional arts.

Application deadline is April 6, 5 p.m. P.S.T.

Details and online application at <http://your.culturegrants.org>.

For questions and technical support, contact Andre Bouchard at [andre@nativeartsandcultures.org](mailto:andre@nativeartsandcultures.org) or 360-314-2421

### Member Discounts

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[adxportland.com](http://adxportland.com)

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3223 NW Guam, Portland 97210

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756 NE Lombard St., Portland 97211

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#### Stan Brown Art and Crafts

13435 NE Whitaker Way, Portland

503-257-0059

# Sculptor finds solution to canine commentary

BY DAVID VARNAU

I am following up on an article in the last PNWS Newsletter where I announced that one of my sculptures was installed in front of Cole Gallery in Edmonds, Wash.

The article closed with my comment that I had noticed that passing dogs were peeing on the base of the sculpture, much like they would if it were a fire hydrant.

Well, it seems that each passing male dog (on leash mind you) cannot resist the urge to pee on the sculpture's steel base.

The steel base had been finished with InstaBlak 333 and, because the sculpture is under cover, it seemed like the finish should hold up fine, but I had not anticipated how much dogs would like the sculpture.

Perplexed as to what sort of finish would protect the steel base, I did exten-



**Left:** Varnau's sculpture on original black base at Cole Gallery.



**Center:** How the base appeared after canine visitations.



**Right:** The base as refinished with a rust accelerating solution.

sive research and spoke with many different metallurgists and finish experts.

Among the more creative suggestions was to attach an electric fence charger to the sculpture so that dogs would get shocked when they pee on it! Of course, any viewer who happened to touch the sculpture would as well.

Ultimately, I found that the only apparent finish that would not become degraded from exposure to uric acid is a thermoplastic powder coating

process. However, to do so would have required unbolt-ing the base from the sidewalk and the sculpture from its base and forking over \$200 for the powder coating. Further, thermoplastic powder coating isn't recommended for objects that have sharp corners, which this base does have.

In the end, I decided to join the dogs. (No I didn't pee on it—although that was one of the suggestions to

make the rust uniform). I stripped off the InstaBlak finish and then applied a concoction to accelerate the rust on the newly exposed steel surface of the base.

I found a recipe on line at [www.instructables.com/id/Produce-a-Rich-Rust-Patina-on-Iron-and-Steel-Safe](http://www.instructables.com/id/Produce-a-Rich-Rust-Patina-on-Iron-and-Steel-Safe) for the following solution:

- 2 oz. white vinegar
- ½ tablespoon salt
- 16 oz. hydrogen peroxide

In order to promote rust on the entire surface of the base, six applications of the solution were required.

I still prefer a black base, but the dogs don't!

## Annals of Art

### Rotterdam police query art students who cast one of their own in plaster

Five sculptors in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, were arrested recently after their art project almost went horribly wrong, according to a story on ArtNet.com

A woman participating in the project had climbed into a box, which the four other artists layered in plaster, said ArtNet, citing a story in the *Nederlanden Times*, which further cited a Rotterdam Police Department Twitter account.

The police department tweet stated, "Artists were panicking when the gypsum became too hard." Firefighters were quickly summoned after the woman couldn't get enough oxygen through a straw, which had been inserted through a tiny breathing hole.

Firefighters had to use heavy

equipment to break up the thick plaster to extract the women from the block.

The art students, including the women who had just been rescued, were brought in for questioning ahead of potential charges of endangering a life. A police spokesperson said, "It does not matter that she herself chose to allow them to cast her in plaster."

It's not the first time authorities have recently come to the rescue of a citizen trapped in a bit of public art.

Last June, an American student was trapped in a statue of a giant marble vagina at the University of Tübingen in Germany because he reportedly "wanted to take a funny picture."

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**RICK GREGG** sculpture at left is called "Wildling," steel and soapstone, 23 inches high. At right, the horse and rider is called



"Nomad Eclipse," a concrete and steel sculpture on a sandstone base, 17 inches high.

## GREGG: Influenced by ancient sources

Continued from page 1

little necessity.

His family moved to San Diego when he was 5 or 6 years old. It was there that he discovered on excursions with his family into the desert southwest the ancient artwork of the indigenous peoples, not unlike the cave drawings at Lascaux in France, which he said would influence him later.

Of the Native American artwork he saw he said, "They really touched me. I could relate to them instantly."

And of Lascaux he said, "I was tremendously influenced."

That influence, along with suggestions of the Spartan and wide-open landscapes he found in the desert, is readily apparent in much of his work today. It is often spare, but in a way in which that elemental simplicity reveals vastly more than it likely would were it otherwise conceived and executed. That character of his work enables it to touch us in ways that penetrate to our very core.

Gregg's attraction to art may have had its seed in ancient sources, but his skill with his tools began as an apprentice of sorts in a wrought iron shop in

San Diego when money was short.

"I was 16, I needed work. They needed someone to clean up, simple stuff. I got a job there. Minimum wage. The owner let me come in after hours. I watched the guys during the days. I would come in at night and teach myself," he said.

By the time Gregg was 19, he was married and a father. He tried night school then but was "totally disappointed" and dropped out. By the time he was 20 he had opened his own place and was teaching himself again. This time it was welding.

"I did that eight, 10, 12 years. After a while, I stopped calling myself a welder and started calling myself an artist. It took a while to get used to," he said.

He's a welder, an artist and also a teacher.

Gregg is sought out by people who want to learn techniques that they can bring to their own work. There is, for example, a technique called skip welding, a sophisticated industrial practice in which welds are spaced out on thin structural members to balance and minimize stresses due to heat. Gregg has adapted the technique to enable him to construct intricate tracery-like

patterns in his artwork.

He works in many media, including glass, plastic, ceramics, wood, concrete and more. "If you can make art with it, I've done it," he said.

In the early 1990s he started working in concrete. He was about 10 years into it when he met Carole Murphy and introduced her to the medium.

"She saw it and fell in love with it," he said, "and then she discovered aerated concrete and introduced that to me."

Gregg's body of work seems dominated by metal, but there are plenty of other media represented in his work and he often creates works that include various materials.

Even though his art has sustained him well into his 60s, he wishes he was better at the business end of his profession.

"I consider myself a very poor marketer," he said.

At present, Gregg's work is shown in four leading Northwest art galleries and has been featured in a total of at least 21 galleries. His work also has been included in 21 juried, group and featured exhibitions and shows in Oregon,

See **GREGG**, next page

# CHAMBERS: Permanent home next step

Continued from page 1

from a drawing she'd created long ago, but, unlike her earlier works, the scale of these pieces required rethinking many well understood construction techniques.

She learned that sculpting life-sized clay art is especially hard on her shoulders, so I built a lift that raises and lowers the piece, keeping her working area at a comfortable level.

Moving the finished greenware to the drying rack and then later into her deep Cress kiln required creating a special crane. Using it, she sculpts directly on kiln furniture, and then lifts and moves the piece without ever stressing the clay.

Armatures to ensure the integrity of the six foot tall trees (made in sections) were another major issue we resolved after much trial and error. Moving these fragile, trees with hundreds of ceramic leaves on branches required constructing special carriages for each.

Through it all Nancy never lost her

vision: her story-place girl reading to an audience of animals is a clear metaphor, speaking toward a world wherein peace and harmony are possible among divergent and often at-odds clans.

Now finished, "A Story Place" was displayed for the first time at Matter! Art Gallery in Olympia, Wash., in December, receiving great reviews in the local press. While that was heartening, an immediate and special delight was to watch as passers-by stopped and stared in the gallery's windows and then came in to walk delightedly around the work. Little children were fascinated, pointing and explaining to their parents what they saw, their eyes aglow.

To augment the art itself, Nancy created greeting cards of the installation. These sold very well at four dollars each. She created a handout, describing the vision behind "A Story Place," which visitors snapped up. And, using the free on-line web development tool Wix.com, Nancy created her own website: [www.astoryplace.com](http://www.astoryplace.com). At first she was reluctant to tackle designing a webpage, but

it turned out to be much easier than she thought and an enjoyable experience.

While the installation displaced a considerable amount of floor space in the gallery, we have the sense that the publicity it created brought in many customers who otherwise don't frequent galleries. They came to view, and ended up purchasing.

The ultimate question is, what to do with "A Story Place?" The question wasn't asked often during the sculpting phase; now it's on everyone's lips. Given its enthusiastic reception by both children and adults, perhaps a place in a children's hospital is appropriate.

It's amazing how many people "know people" who might be the connection that lands it a home. This phase of the project isn't finished; the presentation at Matter! Art Gallery resulted in several leads to follow, and was thus well worth the effort.

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*Nancy Thorne Chambers can be reached at [NancyLeeThorne@gmail.com](mailto:NancyLeeThorne@gmail.com). Lee Chambers can be reached at [ki7ss@arrl.net](mailto:ki7ss@arrl.net).*

## 'We are changed simply by viewing his genius'

From preceding page

Washington and California.

On top of that, people seek him out to offer him commissions.

Recently, he was commissioned to create two trophies for the Bonsai Society of Portland, which will host the Artisans Cup bonsai exhibition at the Portland Art Museum in September, a major event in North American bonsai.

The two trophies include a presentation version to be given to the winner of the competition and an in-house version to be retained by the society.

The presentation version is a stylized forged steel set of small pruning clippers, the iconic tool of bonsai,



**BONSAI ARTISAN CUP Award Trophy (in house)—**Forged, fabricated and welded steel, concrete with walnut base, 30 inches high.

mounted on a walnut base.

The larger award trophy combines a forged, fabricated and welded steel

bonsai tree set on a sculpted concrete base depicting a stonework environment typical of bonsai. The multi-media piece is also mounted on a walnut base, altogether a classic example of Gregg's gift for bringing diverse media into a unified whole.

Owing to a broken arm, Gregg has focused more on his popular welding classes lately than new work, but he was able to share a stunning work in progress in his Southeast Portland studio.

He calls the piece "Pearl" (photo on page 1), so named because it was created largely during an artists' demonstration in Portland's Pearl District. It includes an impressive example of his skip welding, which he uses

dramatically to create the figure's flowing tresses. He's contemplating mating it with a natural burl spherical bowl he received as a gift. Together, the two become one and suggest something akin to Botticelli's "Venus."

Gregg is a longtime member and board member of Pacific Northwest Sculptors. For him, the most important take-away from PNWS is "interaction with other artists, it's invaluable," he said.

His good friend Murphy probably feels the same; she clearly does about Gregg. "We are changed simply by viewing his genius," she said. "Rick Gregg is a true master."

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*Learn more at <http://www.rickgreggstudio.com>.*

# Pacific Northwest SCULPTORS

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## PNWS Spotlight

MESMEROMETER  
EXHIBITION  
OPENING NIGHT

OMSI After Dark  
February 25 | 6-10PM

Join us for a celebration of the late Ken Patton's kinetic artwork and see his newest creation, the Mesmerometer—on view at OMSI.

### PATTON: OMSI event Feb 25; everyone welcome

Continued from page 3

to plan the opening night celebration for the Mesmerometer exhibit. It's set for Feb. 25, 6-10 pm at OMSI.

The event will unveil the Mesmerometer in its new glass and steel case, designed by Marty and constructed by artists Rick Gregg and David "Gonzo" Gonzolez. Materials for the case were donated by The Steel Yard and The Glass People. Everyone's generosity and support contributed greatly to the spirit of Ken's piece.

The Mesmerometer embodies the belief that art, like love, is a verb. It is in the doing; taking part in life's movement.

Please join us Feb. 25 at OMSI in celebration of this.



**THE MESMEROMETER**, seen here during assembly in Patton's studio, is as much an exercise in rich coloration as an astonishing mechanical and artistic achievement. Learn more about Ken Patton on line at <http://www.kenkinetic.com>.