

GO!

MAGAZINE

EVERY FRIDAY IN THE BULLETIN
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Artist,

Affairs of the art

Alan and Helen Post have been collaborators and spouses for most of their 90-plus years

By Andrew Moore

Nearly one year ago, painter Alan Post is struggling to slow down. He paints fast, he said, "perhaps too fast." He wishes he were more meticulous, and would like to spend more time on his paintings.

"I was a watercolorist to begin with, so I learned to paint fast," explained Post. "My teacher said if you can't paint a watercolor and finish in a half hour, it's no good. Well, he's crazy."

Perhaps, but more than 70 years after that lesson, Post still paints "fast and furiously." Painting, he said, is his passion.

Having long ago switched to oils, Post likes to paint landscapes and still lifes that mesh nature with the man-made world. His work "evokes an expressionistic mood" and "pays tribute to post-impressionists such as Bonnard and Cezanne," according to a catalog of his work compiled by the Solomon Dubnick Gallery in Sacramento, Calif.

But the prolific Post is only half of an artistic team. His partner is Helen, his wife of more than 65 years who is also in her 90s. She is a full-time sculptor, and an exciting one, said Post. Her works are "bold and stark," according to the same Solomon Dubnick catalog, and "provide a sensory depiction of the figure rather than representational."

"Their art really complements each other's," said Shelley Hall, a Bend artist who tonight will celebrate the grand opening of her new contemporary art gallery in downtown Bend with an exhibition of works by the Posts (see "If You Go").

"It's a great love affair," said Hall of the Posts' relationship.

"Homage to Richard Diebenkorn II" is a bronze by California sculptor Helen Post.

A native of Alhambra, Calif., Post met his wife at Princeton University in the 1930s. They were married in Yuma, Ariz., in 1946. Because of the difference in time zones between California and Arizona, Post said he was an hour late to his own ceremony.

Post served in the Navy during World War II, and after the war, having earned a master in economics from Princeton, went to work for the state of California's budget office. In his role as a legislative analyst, Post consulted governors and the California Legislature on the fiscal impact of bill proposals and government programs. He ended up working 27 years for the state, and consulted such famous California governors as Earl Warren, Pat Brown Sr. and Ronald Reagan.

"Reagan wanted me as (his) director of finance, but I didn't agree with him," said Post. "Besides, I had the best job in America."

The reason he had the best job, he said, was that he could say "whatever I wanted to say."

"It was a fascinating job," he added.

Post.

In fact, many of Post's works have a Spanish flavor, be it images of matadors and flamenco dancers or warm Mediterranean colors.

Post retired. They purchased a studio in a trendy town near Valencia, Spain, and would spend one month a year there chasing their dreams.

Spot's wife was wonderfully inspiring for both, Post said, and it kept them busy.

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IF YOU GO

What: "Faces and Figures," a retrospective of works by Helen and Alan Post

When: Through May 4, reception from 5 to 9 tonight

Where: Shelley Hall Gallery, 833 NW Wall St., Suite B, Bend above the former Sage House store next to the Tower Theatre

Cost: Free

Contact: 352-8830 or www.shelleyhallgallery.com

All the while he was in government, Post painted. Economics, Post joked, is sometimes called "the dismal science," and he made work less dismal by falling back on his art. It was no problem, he said, to come home from work at the state Capitol, turn off his left brain, turn on his right brain, and immerse himself in his art.

"Painting made my life, which was extremely hectic, much pleasanter," Post said.

Post's introduction to art came during the Depression. Forced to drop out of Occidental College in Los Angeles to help his family make ends meet, Post took a job at a bank. The only classes he then could take, he said, were night classes in art offered by a junior college. He became hooked, and it started a lifelong addiction to art.

"If art was liquor, I would have been an alcoholic," he said.

Post went back to college, and then enrolled at Princeton. When he met Helen, she, too, was a painter. But after they married, they decided only one of them should paint. The result has been a fertile relationship anchored in art, Post said.

"Both I and my wife have made (art) a real passion," he said. "We compare and judge, and that makes life extremely interesting."

Although both had always been artists, the duo didn't start painting seriously until they were in their 60s, after Post retired. They purchased a studio in a trendy town near Valencia, Spain, and would spend one month a year there chasing their dreams.

Spot's wife was wonderfully inspiring for both, Post said, and it kept them busy.

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"Spanish Maid" is a 48-by-36 inch oil on canvas painting by California artist Alan Post. The 91-year-old painter likes to combine nature with the man-made world in his work, many of which were inspired by life outside the Posts' studio near Valencia, Spain.

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"It was a great place," Post said. "I could go out of the house, walk up to the top of the hill and paint farms and the ocean and the railroad along the beach. There was an awful lot of material to paint, and great weather, so I just painted furiously."

Unfortunately, the Posts haven't been back to their Spanish studio in a few years, because of health problems related to their age. They still are coming, though, from either their home in Sacramento, or another studio they own in Carmel, Calif. They share the studio with their only son, who is also an artist.

And, according to Hall, works by the Posts are catching the eyes of collectors. She wanted to buy a Post painting 10 years ago but couldn't afford it. Since then, prices have gone up several times, Hall said, and are set to rise again.

"I see the Posts are absolutely timeless," she said.

"Cleverest art" is what Hall, 37, said she plans to show at her new gallery. Focus will be given to contemporary artists whose work has a modern feel. Contemporary, Hall cautions, "doesn't mean it's all abstract or hard to understand."

"Contemporary art means 1950s to the present, and that's what's kind of a misnomer," Hall said. "It's not a formal term but kind of a style of modern, not traditional, still lifes and landscapes. It's a very broad umbrella."

An artist herself, Hall recently moved to Bend from Southern California, although she was born in Pullman, Wash. Opening her own gallery fulfills a lifelong dream, and Hall is excited to help individuals learn about contemporary art.

"It's different from anything being shown right now, but I see that as a healthy alternative, not competition. We're going to have stuff that's unique."

In addition to works by the Posts, Hall's inaugural exhibit, titled "Faces and Figures," will showcase paintings by other artists, including Julie Brown Smith, Kelly Vivasco, Ashley Wells, David Bogley and Sonya Arletta.

The gallery is located above the former Sage House store on Wall Street, and can be accessed via a stairway that opens onto the sidewalk adjacent to the Tower Theatre.

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