

BUSINESS



Ann
O'Mohondro -
Rodgers

LEFT: Artist Ann O'Mohondro prepares a piece of wood in her garage along the Williamson River before taking it into her studio where she will find an image in it.
BELOW: O'Mohondro paints totem art in her in-home studio near Chiloquin.
BOTTOM: Native American influence can be seen in a piece of her totem art.

Home is where the Art Is

Local artist reflects on
living where she works

Story and Photos by Lee Juillerat

CHILLOQUIN — For Ann O'Mohondro, home is where the heart is.

It's also where the art is. "It is tranquil. It's a peaceful place to create art," explains O'Mohondro of her home/art workshop/gallery along the Williamson River near Chiloquin.

O'Mohondro is the owner of The Riverhouse Gallery. She's also the creator of her own blend of Northwest and Native American "Totem Art," art pieces created on finely finished hard woods.

Her work is unique, and so is her working-living arrangement. She and her husband, Ed Rogers, and her three children by a previous marriage live in a home that Rogers, a Chiloquin-native, built several years ago. The downstairs entry, and an ever-expanding hallway, serves as a workshop and gallery that features O'Mohondro's totems and native art by about 20 other Klamath Basin artists.

"One of the nicest things about having a gallery in your home is you get to enjoy and view all the other people's art. It creates an atmosphere that's more interesting.

"Because I have three kids (Clayton, 11, Tony, 8, and Spencer, 6), I prefer to stay home. It takes time to go out on the road. And there's something else: people get a kick out of seeing where I work. People are intrigued at seeing first-hand what it takes."

People have been viewing O'Mohondro's studio and art by herself and others for the past year so next Saturday she's celebrating with an open house from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wine, coffee and snacks will be offered.

"I do want people locally to come and see the work that's on display. It is also a celebration, not only of my art, but also of the other artists at the

gallery and of the ending of summer," says O'Mohondro.

Her work is totem art, but that isn't what some people think.

"Totems don't mean totem poles. Totems are a figure or a representation of some animal, or plant or natural object, sometimes something considered ancestral."

Many of O'Mohondro's early works featured salmon or trout done in a style reminiscent of Pacific Northwest Native American art, but other pieces feature Indian or wildlife themes. The images are created by using wood-burning tools on varying sizes of finely polished hardwoods. Colors are created from mixtures of pigments and Danish oils. The result is a transparent to semi-transparent image.

"Because the grain of the wood is so beautiful, I don't want to entirely mask that quality. I have to read the grain of the wood and a lot of times there are already images or faces," she explains.

"When I do get in the 'artist mode' I feel like time is standing still. I do feel," admits O'Mohondro with a ticklish laugh, "like I'm creating endorphins — sometimes they're crackling off my fingertips."

"I look to do things with a really mystical and mythical quality," she explains, emphasizing her work is not fantasy art.

Her creations are creating a lot of work, and plans. In recent weeks O'Mohondro has been completing a backlog of custom orders while keep-



a list of 800 Klamath Basin arts-related people.

Encouraging new artists is part of the reason she offers children's classes.

"I'd like to have a facility where I can teach kids year-round," says O'Mohondro, who thinks she will need to expand her workshop/gallery or seriously pursue plans to develop a community facility where she and other artists could work, display and offer classes for all ages.

"There's a lot of talent out there," believes O'Mohondro, herself a self-taught artist.

Ironically, although she had been working with wood for several years, it wasn't until a 1990 accident — she had been a school bus driver in Alaska and a heavy equipment operator — that she focused on art.

"The accident forced me to take my art seriously and I've been at it since. That was a turning point in my life."

O'Mohondro is right at home, literally, creating and displaying her and others' creations. Home is where the art is.

ing new material plentiful at her gallery and other sales outlets.

The Riverhouse Gallery, located an eighth of a mile east of Highway 97 at the Chiloquin turnoff, is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. During lull periods and days off, she works on totems, teaches children's art and expands on efforts to promote a Klamath Basin artists network.

O'Mohondro has organized two artists gatherings and has plans for further activities that might appeal to