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Open Studios Tour set for November 5–6

Artists' stories and behind the scenes details are the heart of the tour

VANCOUVER, Wash. — The Clark County Open Studios Tour is back on the calendar for this fall, Saturday and Sunday, November 5-6. Now in its ninth year, the free self-guided tour continues to build connections as local artists open their studio doors to inquisitive visitors from near and far.

A program of Artstra, Open Studios is an annual juried art event designed to enhance community awareness of talented local artists while enriching the cultural life of Clark County neighborhoods. “We invite the community to step into the artist’s world and be inspired by the process of creativity. You’ll find inspiration, connect with others, and learn first-hand about painting techniques, printmaking, sculpture, glass, ceramic, jewelry, fiber arts, photography, and much more,” says Jennifer Williams, Open Studios Director.

The art and the studios where the creative process happens are as diverse as the artists themselves. This year's tour features multiple farm studios, including father and daughter studios in a historic barn in Vancouver, a sheep farm in Ridgefield, an alpaca farm in Camas, and an organic garden in Fern Prairie.

Driving around the county, exploring creative places can in itself be a fun experience, but tour-goers will find it's the artists' stories and the details behind the scenes that are the heart of Open Studios. Visitors have the opportunity to ask questions, learn how the artists' careers began, how they make their work, what drives them to create, and how they make a living as an artist. Each year, the event showcases both a wide range of art mediums and a diverse mix of artists.

Two artists new to Open Studios are potter-painter-photographer Jessica Joner and her metal sculptor dad Larry Holt. Joner, mother of four and a recent BFA graduate from Portland State University, says she draws inspiration for her art from her own personal life story. Her ceramic works are as elegant as her paintings are intriguing and evocative.

Alongside Joner's studio is a renovated historic barn that serves as Holt's welding studio. He is a self-taught artist whose craft sprung from his career experience as a precision welder. In addition to metal sculpting, Holt's interests include constructing industrial furniture, digital photography, and jewelry making. This one stop along the Open Studios Tour, between Felida and Salmon Creek, offers visitors a view into two different artists' worlds in one very creative family.

Artist Jungmoo Ahn returns to the tour and will be sharing the technique of traditional Korean landscape painting he has been practicing for over fifty years. It differs significantly from the Western tradition of painting in that once a brushstroke has been executed, it cannot be painted over. Ahn explains how each stroke carries with it the artist's emotions and how he strives to create paintings that move and breathe with the life force or *chi* inherent in the landscape—reflecting its beauty, goodness, and truth within a natural world in flux. His work is beautiful and when visitors come to his Ellsworth Springs studio, they can try a few brush strokes themselves.

For artist Sharon Agnor, manipulating steel, bronze, and glass from basic elements into meaningful forms is a therapeutic and spiritual process. But the story behind the work goes much deeper. After a decade of grief, loss, and personal health issues her focus changed from pure aesthetics to symbolic forms that explore what we hide inside. Her complex and thoughtful work acknowledges the pain we cover up in hopes that we may find comfort from someone else and she hopes those who visit her Orchards studio will find comfort in them too.

One new artist with a truly unique medium is Richard Britschgi. After retiring in 2015, Britschgi picked up a hobby of tumbling and polishing rocks. He turned his garage in La Center into a lapidary shop with all the equipment to cut, grind, shape, and polish rocks. Most lapidarist cut slabs and either polish or sell them to jewelry artists, Britschgi takes it a step further to create natural bugs, animals, birds, mushrooms, and insects. His pieces are truly one of a kind and he loves to watch people's expressions when they first see his work.

More information about each of the fifty participating artists and all the tour details can be found at artstra.org. Visitors can customize their tour by planning which studios they'd like to visit using the category filters to find: mediums, wheelchair-accessible studios, available classes, and more.

During the two-day tour, visitors are encouraged to use their mobile device to access a user-friendly, Google map showing all studio locations. But for those who prefer to have

something in hand, the printed tour guides are back this year and can be picked up early from one of the following local gallery sponsors: Art at the Cave and Aurora Gallery downtown Vancouver, Vancouver Art Space at Vancouver Mall, and the Attic Gallery in Camas—or at any studio location during the tour.

Preview Exhibit and Reception

Prior to the tour, the public can enjoy a preview of all fifty artists' work at Art at the Cave gallery at 108 East Evergreen Blvd. in downtown Vancouver. The exhibit opens First Friday, November 4, 5 to 8 p.m., the night before the tour. The show offers a taste of what to expect on the tour and will remain at the gallery through the month of November. Attendees at the preview event will be able to pick up a printed tour guidebook, mark the studios they want to visit and customize their route for the weekend tour.

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About Clark County Open Studios

Clark County Open Studios is a program of the nonprofit, Artstra, and is made possible in part by assistance from the City of Vancouver, Washington Lodging Tax Grant Program. Additional funding is provided by artist application and participation fees, our local business sponsors, plus volunteer and community support.

Clark County Open Studios website: <https://artstra.org/open-studios/>

About Artstra

Artstra is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created for the purpose of promoting, encouraging, and enhancing creative expression and artistic opportunities in Southwest Washington. The arts contribute to this region's unique character as a desirable place to live, work and visit. Artstra and its volunteer board of directors support all forms of art—music, theater, dance, literary, visual, and media art—and work to ensure that arts experiences are inclusive of individuals of all ages and backgrounds.

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