

A mosaic artwork of a forest. The scene is composed of numerous small, irregular tiles in shades of blue, yellow, orange, and purple. The background is a dense forest of dark, slender tree trunks. The ground is covered in a textured, undulating pattern of blue and yellow tiles, suggesting snow or a forest floor. The overall effect is a vibrant, abstract representation of a natural setting.

CONNECTION AND INSPIRATION THROUGH ART

NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2024 | SPECIAL EDITION



Oregon
Environmental
Council



Dear friend,

To love this planet requires a relentless belief in a better tomorrow. This work is hard. To keep showing up with strength and tenacity, we need community and inspiration. We need to stay connected to what we're fighting for. Simply put, we need art.

Beyond the science, data, trends, policies, advocacy and organizing that drive our movement, is the deep personal connection we each share with the natural world. Through art, we can reconnect with nature, process, make meaning and reimagine the world. Who hasn't turned to poetry in times of sorrow, or seen the world differently through a photographer's lens?

This special edition of our newsletter is inspired by the artists who enrich our lives, like those I met on a recent visit to **Sitka Center for Art & Ecology**. We also drew inspiration from a zine created by the Coalition of Communities of Color, Multnomah County Office of Sustainability, and Unite Oregon, **Cultivating Justice in a Changing Climate**. I highly recommend checking it out.

I hope the art shared within these pages invites you to experience refuge, transformation, joy, wonder, regeneration and a deeper understanding of the cherished places and communities we share.

Thank you to each of the artists included. You inspire us.

With gratitude,

Jana Gastellum, Executive Director



ART AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Web: oeconline.org
Social: [@oeconline](https://twitter.com/oeconline)
Email: info@oeconline
Phone: (503) 222-1963

On the cover: Glass mosaic by Mary Driver

“

When it comes to mosaics I'm known as a photo-realist, meaning that I try to recreate a scene with as much fidelity to the original image as possible. So, when I saw this photo taken by a friend, I knew I had to try it. Yes, the shadows on the snow really were that extraordinary blue.”

Mary Driver has been creating fine art mosaics since 2004. A former attorney, Mary and her husband Clint moved to the Rogue Valley in 2006 when the last of their (combined) five children left the nest. Between commissions, Mary works on mosaics and stained glass windows of her own design and occasionally travels to teach workshops both in the U.S. and internationally. MaryDriverMosaics.com

Winter's Scripture

Noël Hanlon

for John O'Donohue

Each view reinvents itself
with dawn, a gradual blue engages gray.
Some days the fog prevents a distance
needed for definition. Dreams jam up
with daylight, the plum barn looms close
to the house, as if morning ends there.

Today the red veins of what's still alive
come forward through the dead gold.
Each strand of the hazel wood catkins
hangs like a tidy thought, their yellow-
green is the underworld of fields.

The earth loves her body,
even in this season where sadness washes
over and through her. Owl hoots soften
the nights, lift them to tree branches.
Geese gently bend the silence that lives
beneath everything we do.

The spindly trees we planted along our border
lean in the direction of winter storms.
They know what we dream for them
but lose hope in the news of the wind.
Perrett Mountain lifts itself
out of the river's blanket, gets on
with its day, its horse fields and tree farms.
But the valley stays folded inside fog.

Today I lit candles before dawn
to pray the light into view. It seemed
to help me. Like the land
standing under water.
There is nothing to do but reflect,
nowhere more present than here.

“
*This poem is a view from my
window, looking out in search of
any source of light to be found in
Willamette Valley winter. I know
how lucky I am to live on this land,
if only to be present to its beauty.*”

Noël Hanlon lives on thirty acres in the Willamette Valley, Oregon, with her husband where they raised their two children. Her poetry is born out of the relationship with the people, landscape and animals, tame and wild, of her native Oregon. Noël is a fourth generation Irish-American, and travels often to the West of Ireland for a farmer's vacation. Noël's two collections of poems, *Blue Abundance* (2010) and *Trusting Distance* (2017) were published by Salmon Poetry in Ireland.

noelhanlonpoetry.com

Noël's poetry also appears on page 7.

There is something sacred about simply experiencing the world around us and allowing it to bring us home to ourselves.

PLACE

“I use art as a practice of truth-telling about the realities of our environmental pasts and presents and a practice of dreaming about the possibilities of our environmental futures. My poem “The Plan”, by marrying the personal and political, poetically lays bare the disharmonies between embodied human experience and socially constructed geographies of institutional land use planning policy.”

The Plan

Aimée Okotie-Oyekan, 2023

I haven't been feeling like myself lately.
The purpose of this division
I have been feeling isolated and out of touch—
is to ensure opportunity for the provision
and like my body is no longer my own,
of adequate numbers of needed housing units,
because my cells attack each other without my consent,
the efficient use of buildable land within
urban growth boundaries
causing unpredictable and painful inflammation.
and to provide greater certainty in the development
process so as to reduce housing costs.

Stress and anxiety about the future of the world,
The mix and density of needed housing,
and about the positioning of my black female body within it,
is determined in the housing needs projection.
exacerbate the swelling in my tissues.
Sufficient buildable land shall be designated on the
comprehensive plan map
All the while, I am starting to believe the stories
the world tells me
to satisfy housing needs by type and density range
about who I am, and who I am allowed to be:
as determined in the housing needs projection.
othered, invisible, unbelonged;
The local buildable lands inventory must document
the amount
my value reduced to labor, productivity, outcomes.
of buildable land in each residential plan designation.

In believing my work was my worth,
I made the fatal error of thinking myself
a worthy sacrifice. A life for a life. My own for the planet's.

Demonstrate to me:
what is a body's zoned capacity for labor?
For extraction? For exploitation?
Study me: am I connected? Livable?
Or am I condemned? Blighted inside? Nonconforming?
Show me: what structures are missing in my middle?
How can something as complex as the world
embodied by my flesh
ever be clear or objective?
By what means could you ever assess my value,
condition my use, police my power?
Never. Not in my backyard.

I would like to appeal for my healing.

Remove the plotlines where there were no prior confines.
Cease to census what a number can't make sense of;
attempting measure to how much love in a square foot,
how much joy in an acre.
This Life is unzonable. Uncodable.
Redistribute the land. Raze the settler state.
A decolonized domain is imminent.
I motion to let liberation have the right of way.
All in favor, say “aye”.

Aimée Okotie-Oyekan is a diasporic British-Nigerian interdisciplinary artist and environmental practitioner based in Eugene, OR, the traditional homelands of the Kalapuya people. Weaving the boundaries of science, art, and policy, Okotie-Oyekan's creative practice stories their personal journey while exploring themes of place, identity, belonging and environmental and social justice.

aimeeokotieoyekan.com

Each of us is tied to the land we inhabit. Yet our homes, neighborhoods and bodies are not equally protected. This work calls us to acknowledge the truth of environmental injustice and work to repair it.

Just Touch

Paola De La Cruz, 2021

Digital Illustration



“*Just Touch is an ode to quiet moments together. I draw inspiration through the intention of living amongst, as part of, and because of the natural world.*”

Paola De La Cruz, a second-generation Dominican artist and community organizer, navigates the intersection of art, advocacy and lived experiences. Her work interweaves digital and analog media to confront cultural identities and communal healing. Central to Paola's artistic ethos is a commitment to mutual aid and resource redistribution, guiding her practice toward community-engaged public art. Paola creates as a testament to resilience, drawing inspiration from her lived experiences in homelessness, queerness and migration.

Instagram: [@happynappystudio](https://www.instagram.com/happynappystudio)

We are motivated by powerful forces including love. Change-making can be big and bold, but it also requires quieter moments to recharge and get grounded.

Way Out West

Mike Vos, 2019

Photography

Mike Vos (b. 1986) is a photographer, visual artist and musician from Portland, OR.

Instagram:
[@studiomikevos](#)
[mikevos.com](#)



“

Drawing inspiration from literary themes such as surrealism and magical realism, I use in-camera 4x5 film techniques to create ethereal representations of the natural landscape to capture the awe and wonder that exists in nature. I'm constantly pushing the capabilities of film photography in service of creating immersive experiences to help viewers better connect with nature through two dimensional images.”

Art has the power to open hearts and eyes. It helps us see the world's challenges and promises in new ways.

Water Was

Noël Hanlon

If you had told me in my youth, in Oregon, water
would trickle away until it was linked with thirsty
words - like shortage or drought - I'd have laughed.
Water, like forests then, seemed inexhaustible.

Water streamed in our backyard - all those dreary winters
childhood never noted but took in. Rain lashed leaves from trees,
our street flooded behind clogged iron grates,

waterfalls poured down from gutters surrounding the house,
impassible puddles wherever we ran. Wet shoes, the flu.

You might as well have told me Mt. Hood would be snowless.



**Jökulsárlón,
Only a Memory**
Mike Vos, 2022
Photography

Art provides a vessel for the grief and loss we experience as the world around us changes. It invites us to remember, reflect and bear witness to transformation.

“In this series, I use an alternative process to develop my rolls of film in a darkroom. When mixing my chemicals by hand, I include a small amount of water gathered from a lake or stream I have visited. My process pays tribute to an indigenous tradition — to talk with the natural world and ask for blessings and permission to share their offerings. Held in the arms of mother nature, these photographs transcend the judgements society imposes upon my identities. The bounds of each image create self-contained portals, a ‘Refuge for (my) queer being.’”



Water 1 (from Refuge for Queer Being)

Jenna Tessler, 2021

Photography

People have always sought refuge in the outdoors. Nature has a magnetic pull that was especially evident in recent years during the early months of the pandemic. Yet, natural places are not equally safe and accessible for everyone.



Water 2 (from Refuge for Queer Being)

Jenna Tessler, 2021

Photography

Jenna Tessler (she/her/they) is a practicing photographer, writer, and a “dabbler” in other mediums. She currently resides in Oakland, California and is an artist with local residency program, Kala Art Institute. Her artwork is heavily inspired by the principle, “process over product,” central to the expressive art therapy methodology.

photobyjenna.com

Instagram: @jbtessler

Everyone deserves to feel at home within nature. We envision a world where all people can feel secure in outdoor spaces to relax, explore and find connection.

REGENERATION



Wildfire Bhavani Krishnan, 2018 Oil painting

Bhavani has always found tremendous inspiration in nature, expressed by her love for art, hiking, and travel. On Wildflowers, “This was painted on location in Spring in the Columbia Gorge when the balsamroot was in full bloom.”



Wildflowers Bhavani Krishnan, 2021 Oil painting

Born in Switzerland and raised in India, **Bhavani Krishnan** currently lives and paints in beautiful Oregon. After pursuing a career in engineering, she picked up the brush again in 2012 and rediscovered her passion for art.

bhavanikrishnan.com

Change is a constant. But some change, like the ferocity of recent wildfires, alters our sense of place and safety. We take inspiration from the natural world that persistently seeks balance and regeneration.



Friends at the Window

Ree Artemisa, 2023
Gouache,
colored pencil, ink

“*I wanted to showcase people accepting climate change as a reality, and working together to adapt and live more sustainably (and joyfully) within their communities.*”

Ree Artemisa makes art about their queer Chicana heritage, and BIPOC enjoying nature. They currently live and work in Portland, OR.

Instagram: @ree.artemisa

Our interconnectedness makes us resilient. Communities throughout Oregon are sources of caring and innovation. We celebrate YOU as part of our community of advocates, supporters and change-makers. Thank you for helping to create a better tomorrow.



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Oregon Environmental Council
1500 NE Irving Street, Suite 430 | Portland, OR 97232
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Commit your kicker for Oregon's environment

The Painted Hills... the Alvord Desert... a sunrise over Malheur... the cool forest air in the Coast Range... the Columbia Gorge and its iconic waterfalls...

Some things are uniquely Oregon – like “the kicker” – an occasional boost in the amount Oregonians get back on their tax refunds, like this year.

If you are receiving more money back than you expected on your 2023 Oregon tax refund, consider **committing your kicker** to a cause that will mean a healthier, more vibrant Oregon today and tomorrow.

Stay Updated

Learn more about recent environmental progress at oeonline.org. Thank you to OEC's members for making it possible!



Thank you to our generous supporters!

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