

Living Here

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2017 • SECTION B



Untold tales

Collaborative approach to telling the story of Oregon's black pioneers

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Shining a light on the 'darkness' of depression

● Artist Angela Ridgway creates metal works from the 'abyss'

A figure stands precariously atop a narrow surface, thrusting both arms and a leg outward, in Angela Ridgway's metal art piece "On the Edge." It's difficult to tell if the individual is triumphant or hopeless, joyful or in danger.

For Ridgway, who has experienced bouts of depression throughout her adult life, it's a feeling she knows well.

"I use the word 'abyss' a lot, or I talk about when I spiral," Ridgway said. "You can be cheery and hopeful, but you can still see that abyss. It's not gone."

Ridgway explores the different aspects of living with depression in her series, "when darkness comes," which is on display at Art on Broadway, where she is a member artist.

Ridgway's first experience with depression came in college, when she was triggered by stress. She didn't have a name for it then — she just knew she was having trouble finding the motivation for tasks as simple as standing up.

"It was the '80s," she said. "Nobody really talked about it back then. I didn't know what it was."

College was also when metalwork first sparked an interest for Ridgway. Her background is in industrial engineering, and she was required to take a metal manufacturing class as part of her coursework.

"That red-hot metal just really intrigued me," she said.

But Ridgway didn't become an artist right away, much less start addressing her depression through metalwork. That came years later, after moving to the West Coast and enrolling in a community college welding class in California. Ironically, her father was a welding instructor for several decades — "welding was in my blood," Ridgway said — but she'd never thought to ask him for lessons.

After finding her passion for metal art, Ridgway started with abstract pieces, and did series of bells, trees and wall hangings. Her typical method was to find metal in scrap yards, and then "the metal decides the piece," she said.

But when Art on Broadway asked her to create a series of new work around a theme, she had to reverse the dynamic. Ridgway had only done one show around a theme before: "Under the Sea." Dealing with depression in her work required her to be more concept-oriented from the start.

"That's really new for me, working with a concept, and then I want to match the metal to the concept," Ridgway said. "I really had to push myself to create a theme that had meaning to me. Being in the gallery in Beaverton has really pushed me to do that. They encourage their artists to create new work."

The timing of "when darkness comes" worked well, as May is National Mental Health Awareness Month. Ridgway will



COURTESY ART ON BROADWAY

donate 15 percent of her show sales in May to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She hopes her work can help spark a dialogue about what living with depression is like, both for those who experience it firsthand, and those who see it in their loved ones.

"I think it's really good that people now talk about depression more," Ridgway said. "But there are still a lot of people who don't understand what it is, either in themselves or in others. Part of what I want to do is just bring that to the foreground, so people can have a conversation about it."

For example, another piece in the show, titled "Just Be Here," tackles the common myth that people with depression are just in a bad mood, and can be cheered up with a joke or some company.

The piece has a tree-like figure in the middle, growing on either side of a bench where two figures are seated. This represents the idea that although there's not much one can do to cheer a person with depression, simply staying by their side can be valuable. In the gallery, the piece is accompanied with the text, "Don't try to make me happy. Just be here by my side and let me know you care."

"It's inspired from a time when I went through a really, really rough patch," Ridgway said about the piece. "I had three friends in particular who really were there for me, and let me just be around them. You really don't want someone to try to cheer you up when you feel that way."

"When darkness comes" will be on display through Saturday, July 1. Ridgway will give a talk at 5 p.m. Saturday, June 10, at the gallery. Space for the talk is limited, so reserve your seat by emailing "info@artonbroadway.net."

Painting strokes of spring

Work from the High Desert Art League, a professional artists group in Central Oregon, is also on display at Art on Broadway. The title of their show, "Dans le Jardin," is French for "In the Garden."

"(The theme) came out of our being tired of the winter," said Helen Brown, a member of the league. "As it comes to be spring, we're getting more and more excited about things growing."

"Dans le Jardin" features twelve pieces celebrating flowers — but that doesn't mean they're all homogenous, Brown said.

"Our artists are so varied," she said. "We have some abstract work and beautiful suggestions of florals. They're suggestions of how you might feel in a garden, warmth in a garden, catching the light in the garden."

The show comes right on time for Mother's Day, and will be featured through the end of May.

There will be a reception with complimentary wine and drinks for both shows from 5 to 8 p.m. this Saturday at the gallery, 12570 S.W. Broadway St., Beaverton.



COURTESY ANGELA RIDGWAY

Angela Ridgway in her studio is Washougal, Washington. LEFT: "On the Edge" by Angela Ridgway reflects the precarious nature of life with depression. BELOW: "Just Be Here" is "inspired from a time when I went through a really, really rough patch," Ridgway said.

IF YOU GO

Reception for "when darkness comes" and "Dans le Jardin," 5-8 p.m. Saturday, May 13 at Art on Broadway, 12570 S.W. Broadway St., Beaverton. Complimentary wine and refreshments will be provided.



STORY BY

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