

# From great HEIGHTS

By air, by land and along rivers, artist Greg Pfarr makes a study of NW mountains

BY NANCY RASKAUSKAS  
THE ENTERTAINER

CORVALLIS — Corvallis artist Greg Pfarr's deep and abiding love for the mountains illuminates his fine etchings and paintings like the unseen warmth of the alpenglow.

Over the years, Pfarr has made many pilgrimages into the mountains, lugging art supplies to remote locations, often accompanied by his trusty dog Bachelor, a 14-year-old black lab named for the mountain near Bend.

His favorite places are where habitat zones mix — where the tree line tapers away and the high elevation makes the light bluer and colder and where glaciers and snow fields loom.

"Between 6,000 and 7,000 feet is my favorite environment," he said. "I like the coast too, but the mountains tend to be the most special to me."

Pfarr attempts to capture the deeper psychological impact of these rugged landscapes.

"In my etchings of high mountain landscapes, I attempt to evoke both the powerful physicality and literalness of the mountains and to call attention to their abstract qualities," he said. "It's like a spiritual interpretation ... A camera puts in everything. I want to put in what is powerful for me."

Pfarr often makes very large format prints of his etchings, a difficult feat in a tricky medium. Over time, he has built up a well-outfitted home studio on Burgundy Drive, near Lewisburg.

"It's harder to have control of a larger surface," he said. "I try to maintain that freedom on a larger scale."

Pfarr's black-and-white and color prints use a variety of traditional and innovative methods that allow him to work directly on copper plates, which he often works extensively to produce the rich, subtle colors, values and textures that the etching medium is capable of. He also uses surface rolls, stencils and multiple plates with etching methods when necessary.

"I like to use randomness," he said. "I like to be surprised by unusual combinations that happen. If you try to get too con-

trolled. It comes out looking not as good."

Knowing when to call it quits on a project is always a challenge.

"You have to intuitively feel it," Pfarr said. "You have to take breaks. I do. Usually it's a bad sign if I think it's great right away."

Pfarr has a BFA in drawing, printmaking and painting and an MFA in printmaking from Ohio State University.

Finding himself in awe of the terrain in Korea while there with the Army, and later a trip to the Rockies influenced his move from the Midwest to Oregon in 1980. His wife, Lisa, is a professor in the English department at Oregon State University.

Pfarr was once active in Artists in the Sky group, giving him another angle from which to study the landscape. He is also an amateur astronomer who has built his own telescope.

His art is in numerous collections including the China National Academy of Fine Arts, The Print Collection at the New York Public Library, The Gordon and Vivian Gilkey Collection at the Portland Art Museum, and the Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University in Salem.

This winter Pfarr was one of 170 artists chosen from a pool of about 1,000 to participate in the 20th National Exhibition of the Los Angeles Printmakers at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery in downtown Los Angeles. The juror was Peter Frank, art critic for the "Village Voice" and "Visions Art Quarterly."

In addition, Pfarr recently had two of his pieces rented by a movie company in Portland for the film "Extraordinary Measures" starring Harrison Ford and Brendan Fraser (scheduled to premiere in March of 2010). The chosen works were an etching called "Snow Along The Deschutes River" and a pastel drawing of a quarry in MacDonald Forest.

Another etching called "Nisqually River, Mount Rainier National Park" was just accepted into Marin MOCA's 5th Winter National Juried Exhibition. It will be up from Jan. 9 to Feb. 7 at Marin Museum of Contemporary Art in Novato, Calif. The juror was Karin Breuer, curator of the Achenbach Foundation at the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco.

Pfarr's work will be on display locally from Jan. 6 to 30 at Pegasus Gallery in Corvallis. A reception is planned for 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Jan. 14, at the gallery. Along with new etchings added to Pfarr's 15-year-long series on Cascade Peaks, the show will include a number of large and small format acrylic paintings and drawings in pastel and chalk, with some portraying Corvallis scenes.



'Nisqually River, Mount Rainier National Park,' a 9-by-34-inch etching by Greg Pfarr, was recently accepted into the Marin Museum of Contemporary Art's 5th Winter National Juried Exhibition.



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Pfarr, in his Corvallis studio, shows three variations on Pine Mountain that will be on display in January at Pegasus Gallery.

## CHECK IT OUT

**WHO:** Corvallis artist Greg Pfarr  
**WHAT:** Etchings, pastels, oils and acrylics.

**WHEN:** On display Jan. 6 to 30.

**WHERE:** Pegasus Gallery, 341 S.W. Second St., Corvallis.

**RECEPTION:** 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14, at the gallery.

**INFO:** exhibit/sales — 757-0042 or pegasusartgallery.com; artist — 745-1021 or gregpfarr@gmail.com.

**SEE MORE OF PFARR'S ART:** www.printartsnw.org/artists or portlandartmuseum.org/visit/rsg/artists/Gregory-Pfarr.

**ON SCREEN:** Pfarr recently had two of his pieces rented by a movie company in Portland for the film 'Extraordinary Measures' starring Harrison Ford and Brendan Fraser (scheduled to premiere in theaters on Jan. 22).



'Steens Mountain,' an 18-by-24-inch etching by Pfarr.