

INTERACTIVE PROJECT TO MAKE STOP AT SH LIBRARY

Photo courtesy of Sal Strom ARTIST Sal Strom, right, with Lynn Moyers, point out the route Strom's art project will take.



Artist Sal Strom is putting together an interactive art project, "Connecting US20," that will travel from Boston, Mass., on the Atlantic shore, to Newport on the Oregon coast.

Her purpose is to link people through her work.

Participants will help create two parts of the project – multi-colored safety pin chains and colorful cheesecloth art. Each person will create two chains, one as a souvenir and the other to be shared with someone in the next town. The cheesecloth art will be used to temporarily adorn and highlight books of local authors.

Strom and her partner Lynn Moyers will be visiting Sweet Home Public Library from 1 to 3 p.m. this Saturday, Feb. 4 for the event.

"Both the safety pins and the cheesecloth encourage participation through color and celebration of art," Strom said. "The pins and cheesecloth are emblematic of the larger role art plays in life and community."

"Connecting US20" is in honor of Strom's mother Gracie Strom, who owned The Sea Hag, a restaurant and lounge in Depoe Bay.

"She would love this project," Strom said. "(She was) all about people and community. She was the kind of person would pick up a hitchhiker and bring them to the restaurant, give them food and take them across town."

Strom grew up at the Sea Hag and has been creating art her whole life. She earned a master of fine arts degree from Massachusetts College of Art.

"I always said the bar was a community center," Strom said. "People come to the bar for the community."

For the Connecting US20 project, Strom is focusing on libraries because of their place as community centers and for how much they offer patrons. People can do research there, use computers, children can learn how to read, she said.

She and Moyers are visiting several Oregon libraries, including Sweet Home, before they start their trip from Boston to Newport in May. These first events will be documented in photos and videos "and will become part of the overall performance," according to their website.

They will show a short video with that imagery in each town they stop in along the Highway 20.

Strom works in different mediums, including paint and video.

She started working with cheesecloth after projecting her videos onto it. At first it was white then she started adding color to it.

After she started painting cheesecloth, she never wanted to frame anything again, she said.

"I always wanted my paintings to be free and have movement," Strom said. "But still, they were contained within a painting."

The cheesecloth is a thin layer, but holds together well because it is strong, she said.

"There is lots of depth," Strom said. "Now that I'm doing this project I'm doing the maps on it."

Highway 20 is outlined in bright green.

"My work has always been about bright color," she said.

They have done some events using the methods that will be employed for Connecting US20 project.

At the end of each event, participants will toss the painted cheesecloth in the air, and because of its light weight, it floats down.

They take videos to capture the energy and movement, she said.

"Everybody starts laughing," she said. "It makes great photos - all different colors floating around."

Strom said her life has been blessed and she wants to give back.

"People are so excited about it. Just with everything so negative going on it feels so good. Working with a bunch of color, you can't be bummed out."

For more about the project, visit connectingus20.com or on Facebook at facebook.com/connectingus20.