Oregon Society of Artists

Founded in 1926 by fifteen artists, including sculptors and architects, the Society of Oregon Artists included many art educators from the Portland Art Museum and the University of Oregon. The first exhibition in 1927 displayed the work of sixty-six artists. In 1929, the group incorporated as the Oregon Society of Artists (OSA) to avoid confusion with an earlier group that was also called the Society of Oregon Artists (1912-1914).

The OSA maintained close ties with the Portland Art Museum, and members were included in the museum's annual exhibitions, which displayed both traditional and modern art. As the museum leaned more toward modern art, members of OSA, who were more traditional and representational artists, found themselves excluded from the exhibitions. A rift occurred between the two organizations, mirroring the controversy in the art community at large. The OSA found other venues for its spring and fall exhibits, including the Meier and Frank Gallery in the Meier and Frank Department Store, at one time called the Burlington Galleries.

The OSA sponsored art exhibits throughout the region, including southwest Washington and on the Oregon coast, and counted among its early members the Museum Art School faculty and the art faculty of the University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts. At one time Pietro Belluschi, Charles Heaney, Clyde Keller, Melville Wire, and Maude Kerns were OSA members.

In 1954, the OSA constructed its own building, designed by member Thayne Logan, on Southwest Park Place near the entrance to Washington Park in Portland. The group, now one of the longest continuous art organizations in Oregon, continues to operate and hold exhibitions.

Written by Jody Klevit

Further Reading:

Allen, Ginny and Jody Klevit. *Oregon Painters: The First Hundred Years (1859-1959).* Portland, Ore.: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1999.

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