Aug. 25, 2011

FireHouse Gallery exhibits pinhole photos

“Light in a Box,” an exhibit of pinhole photographs of Oregon scenes by Rich Bergeman, will be on display at the Rogue Community College FireHouse Gallery Aug. 31-Sept. 23.

A First Friday Art Night reception is scheduled 6-9 p.m. Sept. 2. The RCC FireHouse Gallery is located in Historic City Hall, Fourth and H streets, Grants Pass.

A large-format photographer for the past 25 years and based in Corvallis, Bergeman began experimenting with homemade pinhole cameras in 2009 and was immediately attracted to their low-tech simplicity and the “wide-eyed look” they give to familiar subjects. He photographs with a wooden cigar box fitted with a 5x7-inch film holder that he mounts on a tripod with bungee cords.

“Pinhole is photography in its purest and most elemental form,” Bergeman explained. “It’s nothing more than a box with a very tiny hole on one end and a sheet of film on the other. There is no lens, no focusing, no viewfinder. In today’s world of complexly engineered electronic picture-harvesting machines, the pinhole offers a refreshingly natural and guileless way to look at the world around us.”

Pinhole cameras are descendents of the ancient ‘camera obscura,’ which was used as a drawing aid by artists and scientists since the days of Leonardo DaVinci and were the basis for the invention of photography in 1839.

The photographs on display are printed in the traditional platinum process, one of photography’s oldest and most cherished printing methods: the processes involves brushing the light-sensitive platinum mixture onto fine watercolor papers and then contact printing the negatives under strong ultra-violet light.

Bergeman, a retired instructor of photography and journalism from Linn-Benton Community College, Albany, has exhibited his photographs throughout the Pacific Northwest since the 1980s. His primary interest is photographing the disappearing traces of Oregon’s bygone days on both sides of the Cascades. He’s completing an artist-in-residence project in Baker County. Bergeman’s work can be seen at richbergeman.zenfolio.com.

On display in the gallery’s Community Exhibits Room are “Portraits of Unloved Vegetables” by local artist Catherine Krois. For more information contact Heather Green, gallery coordinator, at 541-956-7339.

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