



Vancouver artist Alfred Maurice, 86, in his downtown studio, said he creates art to understand the world in which he lives. The pieces he's amassed over the past seven decades are his way of "enjoying my trip through time and space and leaving a trail of records of things I've found interesting."

86-YEAR-OLD  
CREATES A  
WORLD OF  
WOODCUTS,  
ETCHINGS,  
ACRYLICS

# Alfred's lively arts

By MARY ANN ALBRIGHT  
*Columbian staff writer*

Walking through Alfred Maurice's cavernous studio in downtown Vancouver is a study in the versatility and sense of adventure needed to succeed in the art world. Woodcuts of natural and urban scenes, acrylic paintings of Chicago, San Francisco and Vancouver cityscapes as well as minimalist, brightly colored nudes cover every table and fill each nook and cranny.

To celebrate Maurice's body of work, Portland's Print Arts Northwest gallery will launch a retrospective exhibit this month dedicated to his prints. It will include etchings,

lithographs, woodcuts and linoleum cuts, and will span the late 1940s to present day.

Maurice moved to Vancouver in 1990 after spending 24 years as an administrator and art professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. More recently he's taught art classes at Clark College for the Mature Learning program.

The New Hampshire native and World War II Army

## If you go

■ **What:** Alfred Maurice retrospective exhibit, as well as Ross Zirkle prints.

■ **When:** 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and noon to 4 p.m. Sundays Feb. 5 through March 2. The gallery will stay open from 6 to 9 p.m. Feb. 7 for First Thursday. Maurice will give a brown-bag lunch art talk at noon on Feb. 21.

■ **Where:** Print Arts Northwest, 416 N.W. 12th Ave., Portland.

■ **Cost:** Free.

■ **Information:** 503-525-9259.

veteran also is an illustrator and typographer.

Maurice has exhibited internationally, but locally his work can be seen at Pike Art Gallery in Camas and North Bank Artists Gallery in Vancouver.

"He's one of my favorite artists, no question about it. He's very charming. He sort of reminds me of Claude Monet when I look at him," said Liz Pike, owner of Pike Art Gallery. "He brings a lifetime of experience as an artist to the community. His artwork has a very unique style that's high in contrast and very colorful."

The Columbian recently visited



Photos by STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

"ART IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL. PEOPLE THINK OF ART AS SOMETHING APART FROM THEIR LIVES, BUT LIVING IS ART."

Artist Alfred Maurice

Top:  
"Cathedral," 1956, linocut.  
Above: "Power Lines," 1985, color linocut.

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# Artist:

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Maurice's studio to discuss how his art has changed over the years. The following interview, edited for space and clarity, delves into what inspires Maurice, where he's been and where he's headed.

### **You've been creating art for seven decades. How has your style evolved during that time?**

In the early stages of my career, I was trying to find my way. I was doing a lot of experimenting with different media, different ideas, pictures of architecture with different spaces. My early work was very eclectic.

There were a few abstract expressionists in the 1950s and 1960s, people like Jackson Pollock, who were very influential. Any young aspiring artist felt he should be an abstract expressionist. "The Ochre Spot" and several of my other prints from that period were in that vein.

In the late 1960s, I did a series of etchings: a box, a plate of fruit and a paper bag. I also did some engravings and woodcuts.

In Chicago in the late '70s, I started doing paintings. I'd always painted mentally, but I started doing cityscapes of Chicago. They were acrylic on canvas and my longest series. I did one a month for

five or six years. In between I did woodcuts of bridges, trees and telephone poles.

In the '80s, I did a series of collages, about 20 using pictures from magazines juxtaposing different ideas.

In the 1990s, when I'd moved to Vancouver, I started doing acrylic paintings of Vancouver and Portland cityscapes. Then I moved on to a series of nudes called "The Painted Ladies." More recently, I started making prints of sketches I'd made over the years and making Styrofoam sculptures out of the packing materials I got from the engineering and computer companies that have space in the building where my studio is. I've also done Northwest landscapes.

### **It sounds like you've worked in almost every medium. What's your next adventure?**

It will be a surprise to me. Something will catch my fancy.

### **Do you have a favorite piece you've made?**

No. They're like children. They're all different.

### **Your recent landscapes depicting Haystack Rock on the Oregon coast, Multnomah Falls, Mount Hood and Mount St. Helens use bold colors and few lines. What techniques were you experimenting with there?**

I was working from memory and wanted to put in as few

details as possible to capture the essence of a place and make it recognizable.

### **What about your paintings of urban scenes such as buildings and bridges? What's the idea behind those?**

The cityscapes were all attempts to tell people, "Hey, look! This is what's around you without all the chipped paint and cracked bricks. These are the forms that are around you. Look beyond all the details and see what things are like."

Almost all my cityscapes have clear blue skies. I'm not interested in clouds; they would just distract people from what I'm trying to say about structures.

### **What are some Vancouver buildings or places you've painted?**

I took the stairway leading up from the Red Lion parking lot and made it "The Stairway to Heaven." The little sign by the staircase says "Authorized Personnel Only." I did the backside of the Biggs Insurance Services building on Evergreen Boulevard and Main Street. I painted the bridge tender's house on the I-5 bridge. In reality it's green, but I liked it better red.

### **You say you're influenced heavily by things around you. What else helps shape your work? What artists have inspired you?**

Jasper Johns has a sculpture of two beer cans, and I did one with two Pepto Bismol bottles that's the morning after. Jackson Pollock was a major influence, and so was Paul Klee.

Klee was a Swiss violinist and artist who did small drawings and paintings that tried to capture states of being.

### **How would you encapsulate your philosophy on art?**

Art is good for the soul. People think of art as something apart from their lives, but living is art. A drawing of a double helix, a manual on how to put together a bike you buy your kid, they're all art. It's a language to say what you want to say. Pictures can communicate more than words.

Art isn't just a subject in school that's the opposite of science. Unfortunately, people oppose art to science, and they forget that early science was done largely by artists, people like Leonardo da Vinci.

People think art is just beautiful things, but look at Francisco Goya's series on war. Sometimes art isn't beautiful at all because it's showing things in life that aren't pretty.

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MARY ANN ALBRIGHT can be reached at [maryann.albright@columbian.com](mailto:maryann.albright@columbian.com) or 360-759-8019.