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THE INDEPENDENT WEEKLY LINE ON DURANGO AND BEYOND




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ArtingAround

Painting from the heart

Artist John Maxon discusses California, community and creativity



John Maxon rests in front of his oil-on-canvas landscape entitled "Aspen Grove," now on display at Fort Lewis College./Photo by Todd Newcomer

by Jules Masterjohn

The history of art encompasses numerous stylistic movements and schools, which have been influenced by the social, political and technological trends of the times. Beginning in the mid-to late-1900s, the San Francisco Bay area became a hotbed of intellectual activity, influenced by Eastern art and aesthetics. The Zen philosophical perspective that revealed "less is better" led to a minimalist attitude among many artists. In the Los Angeles area, light and its perception became of interest to some. These forces and factors enabled West Coast artists to step into a place of innovation and visibility in the American art scene that they had not yet enjoyed. It was an especially juicy and dynamic time in the West Coast art world.

Painter, printmaker, sculptor and Fort Lewis College instructor John Maxon was attending art schools in the Bay Area during the late '60s and early '70s. Recently, we talked about the importance of those times and what he has carried with him to this day that influence his life and art making.

JM: John, how did this particular artistic climate influence you?

MAXON: During undergraduate school, materials were considered "king," and people tried to learn all about the new ones, like plastics and metals, and how to combine them. Also acrylics were just coming into use. There was a lot of emphasis on technique and the whole intellectual approach to art, where the idea was more