

Art & Soul



Steely and Off Grid

Local artist lives the sustainable dream



When local Bend sculptor Galen Ruud began his search eight years ago for just the right property on which to build his home and workshop, he also chose to make a significant life change—to move “off the grid.” Ruud saw the chance to live the ideal of sustainability through the harness of solar and wind energy.

“I started searching for a parcel that I could build on,” says Ruud. “I just kept driving east from town until I found it. I liked the solitude out here, the beautiful sunset view and it was already off the grid.”

In the 5700-acre development he discovered, located about 30 miles east of Bend, there are about 570 lots of which only approximately 25 percent can be used for building.

“It’s sparsely populated,” says Ruud. “Everyone knows everyone.”

To power his home and workshop, Ruud almost entirely uses wind and solar energy. “It’s about 98 percent or more. I also burn wood to heat the house, use propane for cooking, and, for about 15 hours a year, I use a generator.”

There are no wells in the area, so he harvests rain from his roof and also buys drinking water from a state-certified provider, storing it in his 3000-gallon tank. “You can’t waste water,” says Ruud. “You always have to be conscientious.”

Ruud describes his artwork as “contemporary-abstract,” specializing in functional yet aesthetic sculpture. Though he works with various materials such as steel, glass, wood, and stone, his favorite material is steel.

“Some people try to convince you that solar is not a viable energy production, that it’s not reliable. That’s just not true.

I know. I run a welding shop. The sooner this world starts recognizing this, the quicker we can get away from non-renewable resources.”

Most of Ruud’s pieces are one-of-a-kind and can be purchased at shows throughout the area, though he largely works with designers to create his unique furniture pieces. ●

For more information about Galen Ruud’s work, visit www.ruuddesigns.com or call 541-350-8169.