

ARTS

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Turning cigar boxes into art

'Petite Perfection Cigar Box Show' opens at Jessel Gallery

ROSEMARIE KEMPTON

A box of chocolates and flowers may become passé Valentine's Day gifts as romantic people discover "boxes of love" created by artists.

The "Petite Perfection Cigar Box Show" is back again this year at Jessel Gallery throughout February and March.

This show, which was first introduced last February, was so popular that the gallery is planning to host it annually.

The opening reception for the cigar box show is from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 7 at the Jessel Gallery, 1019 Atlas Peak Road.

"I wanted to design a show featuring affordable tiny treasures as the perfect 'box of love' that lasts as opposed to a box of chocolates. Each box is unique," said Jessel Gallery owner, Jessel Miller. This is a show filled with beauty, humor and love. The boxes are inventive, surprising, exquisite, hilarious and generally inspiring."

"This year, we're giving many artists the opportunity to show their work with these intimate pieces. That's why I love doing it, Miller said. "It's becoming an annual exhibit. It's taking a life of its own."

"Many people love art and yet feel they cannot afford an original work of art," Miller said. "This show gives everyone the opportunity to purchase a one-of-a-kind design."

Prices on the works of art in the "Petite Perfection Cigar Box Show" range from \$90 to \$900.

Well over 50 boxes by 35 artists are in the show. This year, a few of the boxes are from European artists.

Larry Youdell

Most of the boxes are topped with miniature oil or acrylic paintings but there are exceptions. Larry Youdell's boxes are decorated with inlaid wood.

Some of the paintings have been attached to the box with Velcro so they can be removed from the box and framed.

Throughout the enormous main exhibit room, the boxes have been arranged on specially installed shelving. Many of professional artist's cigar box creations are directly beneath one of more of their large paintings hanging on the wall. In addition, if the artists have written books, the books are on display in close proximity.

Alan Sanborn

Alan Sanborn's boxes are placed beneath his "East of Geyserville" watercolor painting on the wall.

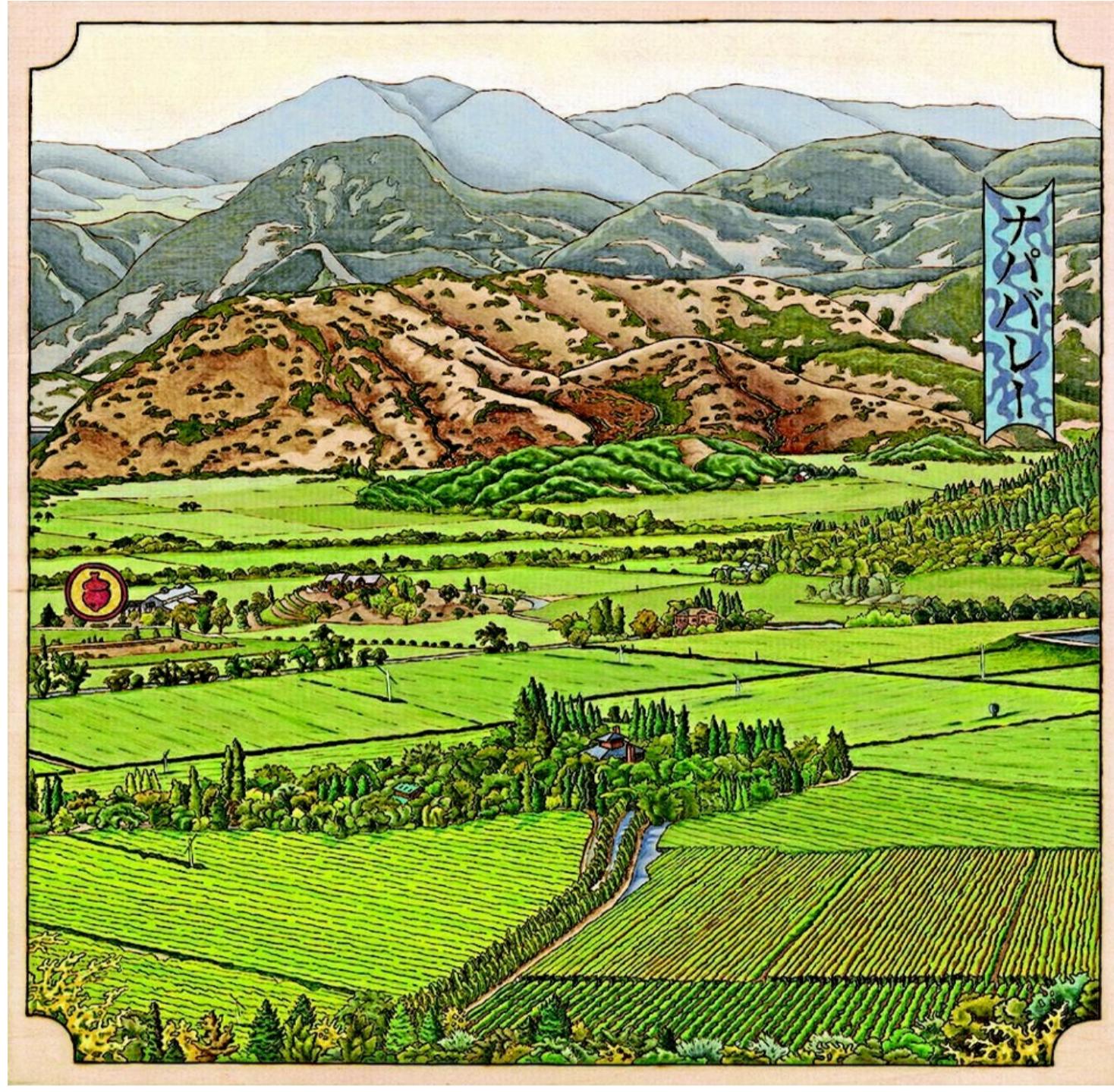
To launch this show, Miller distributed the cigar boxes to her favorite artists and gave them the "mission" of painting on or in a cigar box or creating something special including three-dimensional work.

Next to some boxes is an "Open Me" message. Surprises are in store for those who follow

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Jeanette Monterio's cigar box creation is part of the show at Jessel Gallery.



SUBMITTED IMAGES

One study from Nick Doughty's The Vineyard and Winery Series. The Vintage High School graduate now lives and works in Oregon.

Wood, Fire and Memory

Nick Doughty's artistic reflections on food and wine

TONY POER

In downtown Napa, a small crowd is gathered in front of a taco truck.

Firefighters in their blue uniforms, a teen in low-riders and a red hoodie, and a hipster couple look at the menu. A big guy in an orange San Francisco Giants T-shirt waits for his order. A happy customer gorges on the signature item, his eyes closed in taco de cabeza bliss.

Most nights of the year, it's a colorful scene at Tacos Chavez, the four-wheeled fixture of the A-1 Food Store parking lot on South Coombs Street. Napaans of all types flock to the truck for its steamed beef tacos and traditional Mexican drinks.

From his basement studio 600 miles to the north, in precise lines and rich colors, Portland artist Nick Doughty has captured every detail on a 12-by-12-inch block of wood.

A Napa native and career restaurateur, Doughty moved to Oregon in 2006. When he did, he took with him a head full of food and wine images that inform what has developed into a unique body of artwork. Tacos Chavez, parked around the corner from his parents' home for as long as he can remember, is one of these.

There are more than two dozen others, and counting: intricate, brightly colored images that he describes as "Japanese-inspired art." To execute them, he engraves dark lines onto specially milled wood blocks, employing a traditional wood-burning art called pyrography.

"What I love about color pencils is they provide texture. Pencil and wood together have a lot of it. But, you know, you can only kind of see through pencil, so you don't get saturation. And what I love about ink is the saturation. So I combine them, the color pencils and ink pens."

"I got a wood-burning pen in probably 2007, like a little hobby pen. I was just messing around with it, but I really liked it," Doughty said, hosting a visit to his home studio in Portland's Woodland Park neighborhood.



A work from Nick Doughty's "The Food and Beverage Series." Doughty creates his art by engraving lines onto wood blocks, employing a traditional wood-burning art called pyrography.

"And I started thinking to myself, 'I wonder what happens if I take these pen-and-ink drawings' — which I'd been making — 'and combine them with wood-burning in a Japanese style?'

He figured out he could mix the pens and pencils, whose colors match up seamlessly, and apply them across a grainy surface of wood to create vivid, textured images.

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He uses a wide variety of hues in each. It allows for experimentation with tones, shades, and levels of saturation. With pyrography, however, there's no

room for error. "You can't erase a line burned into wood at 700 degrees, so the level of precision required is paramount," he said.

Precision and detail are intrinsic to Doughty's art.

The works comprise two series. "The Food and Beverage Series" was Doughty's first group of wood blocks, begun in Portland in 2015. His culinary subjects includes baristas, bartenders, waiters, dishwashers, and, of course, chefs.

A second group he started last year, "The Vineyard and Winery Series," is based on viticultural landscapes, from Oakville and Yakima Valley to Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Corsica. Doughty recently completed a piece on Castiglione Falletto, a township in Italy's Piedmont region and hub of some famous Barolo vineyards. His current work-in-progress is a winter depiction

of dormant vines at Chamberlin-Clos de Bèze, a hallowed grand cru site in Burgundy.

They all spring from the mind of a guy whose one-time academic ambitions intersected with a love of food, wine, and hospitality.

Doughty graduated from Vintage High School in 1993, then went on to Napa Valley College and Chico State. Art and history classes in college led him to pursue an masters in Irish Studies at Queen's University Belfast in 1998. While there, he became acquainted with the work of the mid-20th century Irish artist, John Luke, whose Regionalist style of painting was an early influence. Another influence, though it didn't register at the time, was his part-time job at Feasts, a popular Belfast deli.

After finishing his masters in 2000, Doughty recounted, "I was coming home to just recharge for a minute, work for six months, and then go and do a PhD in art history. I wanted to become an art history professor."

Back in Napa Valley, he got hired to help run Palisades Market, the prepared food and fine wine shop in Calistoga opened by Joel Gott and his late brother, Duncan, in 1993. As Doughty eased into the "temporary" position, it became a professional turning point.

"I came back and started working for Joel and Duncan at Palisades. And it was working with them, I just fell in love with the industry. I couldn't believe that this thing, this cooking and selling cheese and wine and everything — I'd been doing it to pay my way through college — was what I actually wanted to do."

Doughty had already been drawing and painting for years, and even experimented with woodblock carving. But he

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Cigar

From C1

the instructions. Some boxes have wonderful stories inside as well as outside.

"I love surprises, and I have always loved boxes so the most interesting feature besides the wonderful artwork on the outside of the boxes is the fact that some artists added surprises on the inside," Miller said.

There is rich diversity in the exhibit's appearance and subject matter.

Cris Kelly

One of the more unusual boxes is Cris Kelly's sculpture of a man with a cigar and his dog atop the box.

Laura Regan

A number of boxes have paintings of animals. Laura Regan's boxes feature detailed paintings of animals such as her appealing Australian koala.

Gayle Simpson

Gayle Simpson, a retired art instructor and cancer survivor



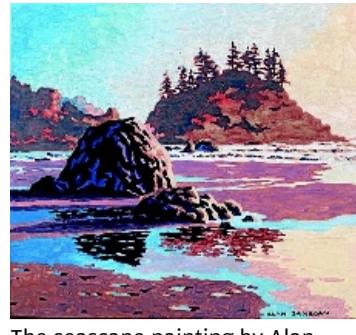
European artist Maria Zadro painted the kitten for the cigar box show at Jessel Gallery.



Laura Regan's koala painting is in the "Petite Perfection Cigar Box Show" at Jessel Gallery throughout February and March.



Diane Pope's love bird painting is part of the "Petite Perfection Cigar Box Show" at Jessel Gallery throughout February and March.



The seascape painting by Alan Sanborn is among the paintings in the "Petite Perfection Cigar Box Show" at Jessel Gallery during February and March.

and viewer," Monterio said. "The viewer engages by touching the artwork."

"I also like to see all the artists come together in their creative ways. I think it enriches the community," Monterio said. "It's a community builder."

"There's something sweet about a small box holding treasures. It brings me back to my childhood," Monterio said. "In a way, these boxes are a metaphor for a person. You see the outside but don't really know a person until you see the inside."

Doughty

From C1

described Joel Gott as "a massive influence" on his culinary career.

"He didn't even know I did art, and I don't think he cared at the time. But he introduced me to food, and he's the one that made this my job in food and beverage. He made me want to do this for a real living."

The purveying skills he learned under Gott would serve him well in 2006, when he was offered a management position with Elephants Delicatessen, a large operation in Portland. At the time, he and his wife, Heather, had a 3-month old daughter and a desire for a change of scenery. He accepted the job offer, and they've been in Oregon ever since.

Along the way to becoming the company's food and beverage director, Doughty maintained and expanded his interest in art, particularly the 19th century ukiyo-e and shin hanga art movements. My goal is to update these two traditional art forms into my own unique style, while honoring both."

In all of Doughty's woodblocks, he includes a feature that also honors his grandmother, Zee Doughty: a small, red acorn in a circle. He explained that it's called a kamon, or the Japanese equivalent of a signature.

"When I was a kid, my grandmother and I would make 'acorn people.' We would go collect acorns and paint faces on them. That always stuck in my head as my first introduction to art. So I decided to memorialize her as a way to sign my pieces."

The acorn appears in a different place on each woodblock, as does Japanese lettering in a vertical box that Doughty noted is often mistaken for his signature but is actually the work's title. The Tacos Chavez title, which he'd intended to translate as "Kitchen Car," caught the



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUBY DOUGHTY

Nick Doughty's working with his "hot pen."



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUBY DOUGHTY

Nick Doughty in his Portland studio.

He knows the industry, so he doesn't make a mistake."

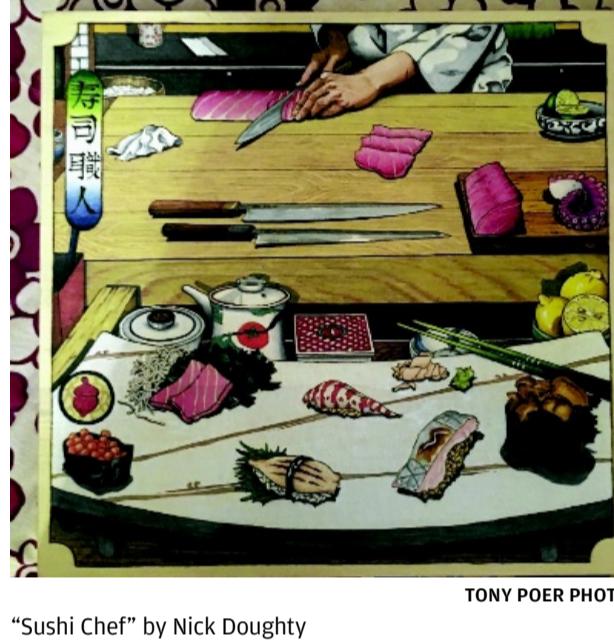
Though he wasn't fully aware of Doughty's artistic bent in the early 2000s, Joel Gott identified something special in his former employee.

"You know, I worked with a lot of people over those years at Palisades Market," Gott recalled over the phone recently. "Nick was definitely the leader in curiosity about food and wine and was one of the few people that would actually go and read and research stuff. Then he'd come back with crazy ideas and brilliant ideas and was gung ho. He was just a very motivated, inquisitive person."

In his basement studio, Doughty pulled out the woodblock originals of many of his works. Like the ukiyo-e and shin hanga masterworks or the Regionalist paintings by John Luke, they're small. But his potential range of subjects, on both sides of the Atlantic and across most categories of the food and beverage world, is enormous.

It's a logical progression from the images of a noisy kitchen line or an evening by a taco truck to "Vineyard," Doughty's 2016 take on the historic Red Willow Vineyard in Washington, with its stone chapel, tiny workers between the vines, and the majestic Mount Adams in the background.

Or "Napa Valley," the third woodblock in the "Vineyards" series he created last year that depicts



TONY POER PHOTO

"Sushi Chef" by Nick Doughty

the back side of Far Niente Winery, an expanse of Oakville, and, looking east, the varying shades and contours of the Vaca Mountains. Being a Napa native, it's a work he's especially proud of.

"When I was thinking about a Napa piece, there were so many I wanted to do. And I thought, 'I have to pick one thing that represents this area that means everything to me in Napa. You know, the whole valley,'" he said. "Oakville, I think, really kind of hit home to me."

In the summer of 2017, in between producing these works, Doughty took a trip back to Napa. With some prints in hand, he paid a visit to Gordon Huether. The highly established Napa artist is one of his mentors, though his work and Huether's famously large, site-specific public art couldn't be any different. Still, Huether both admired the woodblock prints and appreciated the many hours he spends on them each week, on top of his Elephants Delicatessen job — Doughty's other passion.

"I'm not sure that he wants to fully make a living doing it. I think he's still kind of testing the waters to see if that's possible. The style that he's working in and the technique is kind of old Japanese, very, very detailed. And, you know, each work has a deep kind of story," he said recently at his studio, while a couple of his assistants worked on a massive metal sculpture right outside the window.

"I think that Nick's work is very unique and very unusual. And I think that he could be very successful with it."

Back home in Portland, Doughty takes a slightly different view of his dual careers.

"People say, 'Why don't you become a full-time artist?' One, I love what I do; two, art doesn't pay that well; and three, I wouldn't have anything left to draw because, I mean, all I'm drawing and doing my artwork on is food and beverage, and I need to see it every day. I'm living it every day."

Nick Doughty's artwork is viewable on his website, www.nicholasmdoughty.com

"I'm not sure that he

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