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The ‘Golden Dinosaur Era’

Alyce Paul Curiosities: Full of spunk, cheer and whimsy

By SUZI THAYER | Posted: Friday, December 9, 2016 - 8:30am



Brooke Hoerner holds some of her curiosities at Ae Ceramics Home Store in Boothbay Harbor. Courtesy of Alison Evans

Brook Hoerner is a serious artist who makes some seriously curious things — things like jellyfish and gold dinosaur air planters, and copper-covered (real) honeybee earrings. Her business is called Alyce Paul Curiosities (<http://www.alycepaul.com>).

That explains the Curiosities part of it. The other part — Alyce Paul — comes from her grandmother. Alyce Paul lived to be 100. “She knitted a washcloth a day to keep her hands busy. If something was broken she would fix it with a rubber band and a paper clip. She is the name and spirit behind my company. Her name also encompasses my entire family, whom has inspired me and taught me how to turn something useless into something useful.”

On her website, Hoerner writes that she creates novelties from nostalgia. “Creativity runs in my blood. My mother is an amazing pastel artist, my grandmother was a painter, my brother a computer animation artist, my dad a chef.”



Golden stegosaurus air planter by Alyce Paul Curiosities.
SUZI THAYER/Boothbay Register

Originally from Colorado, Hoerner moved to Portland in 2011 to work in the restaurant business. In 2013, she decided it was time to start thinking about what she really wanted to do with her life.

She started honing her art, and “figuring a lot of things out — mainly how much I had left to learn in order to be a successful self-employed artist.”

Hoerner earned a business degree from the University of Colorado–Boulder. She said she feels that knowing business is important for artists. “The only way to survive and be successful as an artist is to have the skills and ability to sell it.”

Other than some pottery and metalsmithing classes, Hoerner is self-taught, and at some point decided she needed a mentor to help her get started in the art world. She reached out to her friend, Alison Evans, of Ae Ceramics Home Store (<http://aeceramics.com/home>) in Yarmouth and Boothbay Harbor.

“Alison is now my full-time employer, friend and mentor,” she said. “And I am fortunate in the sense that right now, my business is more about satisfying my soul than my bank account.”

Hoerner is now making her art and is marketing and sales manager of both stores. Her newest endeavor is copper plating. “I discovered copper plating about a year and a half ago,” she said. “It feels like magic. That has always been my favorite part about ceramics — the transformation of an object. Once you put the piece in the kiln and take it out 24 hours later the piece has completely morphed, like a butterfly from its cocoon. It’s reminiscent of Christmas morning every time you open a kiln.”

She said the best part about copper plating is the ability to not just recreate something, but the ability to preserve it.

Last summer Hoerner set up her studio in a friend’s cottage in Harpswell. When she moved in, she discovered several hundred dead honeybees. Instead of sweeping them outside, she transformed them into copperplate earrings and pendants. “To me, the honeybee is symbolic of how our actions can impact the world,” she said. “Each honeybee is unique and exudes its own personality.”

Another unusual item Hoerner is making is dinosaur planters — gold ones — for small air plants. Why? She had ordered some small air plants (plants that don’t require soil, just a weekly or bi-weekly wetting of the leaves), intending to make air plant jewelry — a living, wearable art. “But once I received the plants ... I was uninspired. I like to live life simply and trying to keep my jewelry alive sounded like too much work.”

She regrouped. Her then-boyfriend had a thing for dinosaurs. They had toy dinosaurs in the bathroom, hovering over the kitchen sink, and



Golden dinosaur air planters by Alyce Paul Curiosities. SUZI THAYER/Boothbay Register



Copper honeybee earrings by Alyce Paul Curiosities. SUZI THAYER/Boothbay Register

holding onto the handle of the freezer. “With a plethora of dinosaurs and air plants they just came together. Before I knew it I was in the Golden Dinosaur Era of my life.”

Hoerner's environmentally friendly, unusual, interesting and curious works can be found at Ae Ceramics Home Store, at Picnic (<http://www.picnicportland.com/>) craft fair in Portland, and a limited number on Etsy.

“I’ve always loved making things,” she said. “The more I can build something from the ground up, the more I love it. I get a surge of excitement when I learn that something can be made from scratch.”

Alyce Paul Curiosities will be displaying and selling items at a sale at Picnic’s holiday sale on Dec. 11 and at Breathing Room yoga studio in South Portland on Dec. 17.

A portion of Alyce Paul’s proceeds go toward environmental causes. To order Alyce Paul Curiosities, call 303-532-9828 or visit the business’s website at www.alycepaul.com (<http://www.alycepaul.com>) or Facebook page



A jellyfish air planter by Alyce Paul Curiosities. SUZI THAYER/Boothbay Register

(<https://www.facebook.com/alycepaulcuriosities/>).

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