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## Acalanes Student Creates Own Jewelry Line

By Sophie Braccini



Siena Kuan (left) and Soo Kim (right) show off Kuan's jewelry at Hello Tiara in Orinda's Theatre Square. Photo Sophie Braccini

a little snail, panda, and wiggly worm as well as other objects like Pokemon, hearts and peaches, or chairs.

"The jewelry Siena creates is for people age 7 to 30," says Kim who was wearing a tiny pile of little chocolate chips cookies tied up with a minuscule blue bow. The precision of the hand-made work is very impressive, while the playfulness and colors appeal to a younger clientele.

The Kuan family is very much into the arts. Siena's father is an architect, her mother Patricia paints and makes jewelry herself, and her brother Ethan makes LEGO movies. "Siena was always very artistic," says Patricia Kuan. "When she took digital art in the ninth grade there were a few of her creations that were chosen to make the banner for the movie 'Sugar.' Her artwork was also chosen for the Acalanes Spring Concert."

Siena was recently recognized for her entrepreneurial spirit by the Lafayette Partners in Education's Project LPIE competition as a young entrepreneur and won a \$150 stipend to help develop her project.

Siena started showing an interest in clay in the second grade, and was making animals, leprechauns and park scenes as gifts, "but the problem is that it would not harden," says the young artist. So she researched other types of material on the Internet and found polymer clay, a substance that could be hardened in a conventional oven.

The reserved teen finds both inspiration and advice on the Internet. "I saw pictures of charms that people made out of clay on Instagram late last year," she remembers. "I thought that I could do it, too, and I started."

She buys blocks of colored base material, rolls it, cuts it, shapes it, attaches it, uses pastels to create color effects, or gives it texture with a series of brushes, before adding a glaze if she wants a shiny finish. "I have to work quickly because the clay can become too soft when I work it too long," she says. And when she needs advice, Instagram pals are ready to give it.

As soon as she started making her jewelry, she decided to start a business, naming it Fancy Bacon Creations and started selling on Etsy. Then a few weeks ago, Kim says one of Siena's classmates came into her store to buy a hair clip and she showed her an online picture of Siena's work. "I was immediately interested," remembers Kim.

Siena Kuan's head is filled with a world of whimsical bright objects inspired by Asian pop culture - cute little pandas, colorful giggly worms, Chinese peaches that look like little pink hearts with green leaves. The 15-year-old Acalanes student turned an early passion for clay into a jewelry business, and now sells charming clay pendants, brooches, pins and earrings online and at Hello Tiara in Orinda's Theatre Square, a store owned by a former Acalanes student Soo Kim, who wants to support the younger girl's creativity.

"The images form in my head as I observe the world around me," says Siena, who rarely draws before she creates a new model. She is also a big K-pop fan. "I like what's outgoing, flashy, with vibrant colors," she says.

She has a food series with a little pile of chocolate chip cookies, watermelon slices, ice cream cones, bacon slices (Siena loves bacon), and an animal series with an Anime look to it, including

The young girls brought pieces into the Theatre Square store and created a display that elicited a very warm response from clients, according to Kim. "People like the fact that these are all unique hand-made pieces," says Kim. "You can't find something like that everywhere, and additionally, Siena can make special pieces to order."

The young Acalanes student recently made a rowing oars pendant for someone who is into crew. "I was concerned the piece would be too easily breakable," she says, "so I put a thin metal rod inside the clay."

Siena plans to study business in college, and hopes to continue producing and selling her art as a hobby or a profession.

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