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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

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 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.

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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## 'On Looking' Opens Eyes to Local Writer's (and Walker's) World

By Lou Fancher



The shadows and contours created by the sun shining on Saint Mary's College can change over the course of just minutes, altering the experience of a walk. Best-selling author Alexandra Horowitz's book, "On Looking" discusses the beauty of spatial awareness and subtle differences in our surroundings.

Photo Andy Scheck

Oh, to walk! As a freelance writer who abhors sitting, there's nothing better than a quick stride out the door and 20 minutes in the Lamorinda outdoors. When deadlines loom, even a run on a treadmill miraculously supplies an article's lead, usually within the first mile. Like many fidgety folks, I give myself a hike up the hill as a reward for each nearly completed article. Upon my return, silly sentences are suddenly easy to edit, as if walking in the clear air has swept aside muddled thoughts and left only much-needed clarity.

With a packed schedule, the walk usually follows the same, well-known path: across the parking lot, along the sidewalk, around a big curve, into the street (I detest those slanting driveways interrupting the sidewalk and resort to the road), climb the steep hill, loop the cul-de-sac, wave "hello" to far-off Mount Diablo, and reverse all.

Over time, I've discovered some things change, some things stay the same. Neighbors who pass in their cars no longer scowl, but instead, they smiled and wave, having grown accustomed to the lady in the street. Will turkeys still poop more on the side-

walks than they do in the road. Trees grow and some die, homes peel and get painted, and the dents on a garage door, where a neighbor boy practices his pitches, slowly inch higher as the years pass.

Traveling the same route, I've found the comfort of constancy and have been chastised by change, which combined, remind me to accept both departures and arrivals.

But what if I weren't so eager to move? What if I worked in a job as interesting and stationary as a door-knob? (Doorknobs are actually fascinating, but I've a writer's curiosity about everything.) Or what if my only walk was a dash from BART to a San Francisco skyscraper? How would I find spontaneity, gaiety – and that cherished clarity – a glorious setting provides? And how will I survive, when I am much older and a journey might consist of a 30-foot walk down the same hallway, day after day?

One of 2013's best books, "On Looking: Eleven Walks with Expert Eyes," by best-selling author Alexandra Horowitz, helps all of us look upon familiar terrain with fresh eyes.

Horowitz's first book, "Inside a Dog," spent 63 weeks on the New York

Times Bestselling list and showed readers the world from a dog's perspective. Trained as a cognitive scientist, she teaches psychology at Barnard College, Columbia University.

"On Looking" has Horowitz taking 11 ordinary walks with "experts" – a toddler (her son), a dog, a blind person, a geologist, an artist, a doctor able to make a diagnosis by simply observing a person's gait and more. Seeking to re-awaken her "perpetual wonder," in familiar settings, she sees a crowded city's geology as would a chess master: moving parts destined to fulfill predictable future patterns. Every building becomes a "family" of stones; her increasing spatial awareness adds a fourth dimension: the distance separating two people becomes an entire psychology, a hole the size of a quarter through which a squirrel can pass amazes her perception.

It's almost a guilty pleasure that Horowitz writes so well. Words like "belching" and "crepuscular" (active at dawn or dusk) happily reside on the same page; a brief history lesson on the origins of sidewalks fascinates; a woman's wildly swinging arm is described as "conducting an orchestra at her toes." ... continued on next page

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