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An artistic treasure hunt 'R-evol-ution'

By Cathy Dausman



Deborah Rhee works on her "tiny talismans."
Photo Cathy Dausman

Deborah Rhee admits to recently "feeling stuck" artistically. The Lafayette abstract painter (www.deborahrhee.com/blog/the-beat-goes-on-now-hanging-at-jennifer-perlmutter-gallery) had noted the apprehensive mood of many of her fellow Californians following November's national election and decided to do something about it.

Enter her "Tiny Talismans" art card-cum gift project, something she describes as a "silly little thing." Yet it seems there is magic in Rhee's free talismans, from their creative process, to their surreptitious placement around the area to their eventual discovery by delighted Lamorindans.

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, there couldn't be a more appropriate time for people to discover one of her Revolution project art cards. Rhee said she even discovered the word love hiding, albeit

backwards, within the word revolution.

Just slightly larger than a conventional business card, each talisman is an oil and glaze abstract done on canvas card stock and signed and numbered on the reverse. The first round of cards were enclosed in envelopes and hidden at eye level. Fearing the item might be ignored, she switched to translucent, beribboned net bags with "a gift for you" tag enclosed.

"Just the idea of leaving a Tiny Talisman for someone to randomly find seems to put a smile on people's faces," Rhee writes on her blog.

"Actually going out and leaving them around town had my friend and I grinning all afternoon. We felt like kids in on a secret," Rhee said. "The joy of giving is a boundary breaker. It's one heart to another," seeming to emphasize the Valentine's Day vibe. "Art has an energy gifted to the person taking in the art," she explains. The first batch she painted in blues and greens, for their calming effect. Rhee designed the second batch in rainbow colors, for inclusion.

Rhee started her project the second week of January; her goal is to distribute 200 Tiny Talismans locally, but the project could have a much larger impact. A teacher in Australia (Rhee is Australian) discovered her Facebook page (<http://tinyurl.com/gozh6qc>) and has her class developing something similar. There is also a printer in Dallas, Texas, who wants to mass-produce her talisman artwork, but Rhee isn't interested. "This isn't a Pokémon Go find," she assured, "it is art; a one-on-one connection." Rhee hopes her small, random acts of kindness make it a good day for each recipient. "I'm just little Deb in my garage (studio)," she insists. "My magic is my painting."

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