

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."

Moraga man is Grammy nominee once again

By Cathy Dausman



Alan Ferber

Photo Christopher Drukker

Musical lightning strikes twice, as Moraga native Alan Ferber earned his second Grammy nomination, this time for Best Instrumental Composition for "Flow."

To say Ferber plays saxophone is a bit like saying Duke Ellington or Louis Armstrong were musically inclined. Lamorinda Weekly caught up with Ferber via email while he was on the road with saxophonist John Ellis appearing at the St Barts Music Festival. Between performances he enjoyed "some much needed time to rest and recover from a busy year."

Ferber is on the faculty at NYU's jazz studies program, teaches privately and runs two ensembles, and has also been a steady presence at the Lafayette Summer Music Jazz Workshop. He admits having "un-

fortunately" given up playing in live Broadway orchestras: "Between my teaching, composing, gig schedule, and family commitments, my plate is too full," he says.

Family may have been the reason "Flow" came about. Ferber used a Chamber Music America grant for new jazz works to compose an hour-long piece called "Roots & Transitions" (Sunnyside Records) during the first year of his young son's life.

"My experience as a new father informed the shape of this piece," he says. The work features solos by Ferber on trombone and solo trading between Scott Wendholt on trumpet and Nate Radley on guitar. There's still more family involved as well – Ferber's brother Mark plays drums, as he did on Ferber's 2014 Grammy-nominated album

"March Sublime" (also Sunnyside Records). "A lot of my music is written with Mark in mind so I see him as somewhat of a producer as well, even though he may not know that," Ferber said. While Ferber's earlier Grammy nomination (www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0723/pdf/All-That's-Jazz-Moraga-man-earns-a-Grammy-nomination.pdf) made use of a 17-piece big band, "Roots & Transitions" features his nine-piece Alan Ferber Nonet. It is the group's fourth album since their formation in 2004.

Ferber says he has become more involved with the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences since he was first nominated. "The Grammys have been beneficial to me," he said, "and I would really like to see other emerging artists benefit as well."

The 2017 Grammy awards program airs at 8 p.m. Feb. 12 on the CBS network. Ferber's family will accompany him, dressed to the nines, or as Ferber might say, to the Nonet. "My wife Jody and I are even in process of shopping for a tux for our 3-year-old," he says.



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