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NEWS



Photograph by Jacqueline Ramseyer

Pop Art: Sonya Paz is opening an art shop in the Campbell Courtyard. Her pieces are colorful and fun, such as, 'Mobilia Floral Trios #3,' (back) and 'Life and times in the Valley'.

Sonya Paz opens gallery in Courtyard

By Cathy Weselby

Downtown Campbell is about to get a lot more colorful. Lively pop-artist Sonya Paz is opening an art shop in the Courtyard.

Her work is usually described as vibrant, dynamic and whimsical. There's also a dimensional aspect to her paintings that

becomes more apparent when they are viewed in person.

When she was a child, Paz was taken to a Picasso Cubism exhibit, and she was attracted to the artist's use of paint to create dimensions and depth. She saw a painting of a woman who was facing three directions, and she kept walking by the painting and watching how the eyes followed her. This fascinated her. When she returned home, she could still see the painting in her mind, and it inspired her to be an artist.

Paz is also inspired by American pop artists Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Keith Haring, and their influence can be seen in her work.

"I do what my art instructors told me not to do," Paz says. "My work comes from my heart."

Paz grew up in the South Bay; after graduating from high school, she opted for adventure over college. When she was 20, she visited her brother, who was stationed in Germany, and ended up working in a ski shop in Stuttgart. It was also a chance to travel around Europe.

Her sense of wanderlust served her well.

Paz gets her inspiration from life experiences, as well as flavors, smells and tastes. She says she loves watching the Food Network, especially *Ace of*

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Cakes.

Paz is a prolific painter, and jokes that inspiration also comes from more unconventional places, such as working things out of her system from raising a teenager.

She is not content to limit her art to canvas and acrylic. Paz and her partner, Mark Kovich, have incorporated her style into clocks, wristwear, ceramics, pillows, T-shirts, magnets and greeting cards. Her latest works are what she calls "metal luminart," which feature her whimsical designs engraved on recycled aluminum.

Currently she has a working gallery in an old fruit-packing warehouse on Lafayette Street in Santa Clara. The building was redeveloped in 1997, but still retains its authentic character each time a passing train rattles the walls.

During the past Christmas season, she rented temporary space in the upscale Santana Row. About a week after she closed the shop, her friend and fellow artist, Debbie Arambula of Heartworks Gallery, told her about an opening next door to her studio in the Courtyard.

The Campbell location is a mere 350 square feet, which Paz describes as "enchanting."

"There's a good feeling about it," Paz says.

Paz says her customers include a lot of first-time buyers as well as collectors, so she offers a range of price points. One of her customers is an art collector who commissioned Paz to paint a portrait of his daughters. The portrait now hangs in his house between an original Picasso and an original Chagall.

Although she always painted part time, it was fate that pushed Paz to become a full-time artist.

In 2002, she was a web designer for Adobe Systems, and her entire work group was laid off. She says she spent her first unemployed day painting and didn't stop.

Before learning web design, she was a freelance graphic artist specializing in corporate identities, and then a quality assurance test engineer on Photoshop for Adobe Systems.

Kovich is also a former high-tech worker. He runs the business' product development and promotion.

"Sonya doesn't play by traditional gallery rules; instead she cut her own path," Kovich says.

In addition to her galleries and website, her work is sold through wholesale trade shows to art retailers all over the country.

Kovich says that they strive to create relationships with the galleries and retailers who sell her work. For example, he might send a prototype of a product to a gallery, and ask them to display it and gather feedback. From the customer comments, he then decides if it's profitable to go ahead with production and has a better idea on pricing.

Beyond making a profit, Paz believes it is important to give back to the community. She designed a limited edition watch, "Passionate Survivor," with a pink leather band and a pop-art image of a woman wearing a pink scarf. She donates 50 percent of the proceeds to the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

Dogs and cats are also helped from her work, with her two watch designs, "Wishful Thinking" and "Cat-itude." The jewelry benefits the Humane Society Silicon Valley. Because her Santa Clara gallery is close to the animal shelter, Paz partnered with the Humane Society Silicon Valley to hold an "Art by the Pound" event in October 2006. The event featured animals for adoption and artwork inspired by animals.

Community Newspapers Survey Results*

99% of all residents report receiving their Community Newspaper

81.4% read their Community Newspaper

81.4% frequently purchase products and services advertised in their Community Newspaper

* CVC Audit, January 2006

"You have to give back, and when you do, it comes back to you ten-fold," Paz says.

In 2002, she painted two sharks that were auctioned at the SharkByte Art Event in downtown San Jose. Her artwork has been selected for the Sausalito Art Festival T-shirt design for 2004 and the Palo Alto Festival of the Arts in August 2004.

Now she is ready to introduce her work to residents in the Orchard City. She will be part of art scene in historic downtown Campbell.

The Sonya Paz Galley Pop Art Shop's is scheduled to open its doors April 6, with a reception from 6 to 9 p.m.

For more information on Sonya Paz Gallery-Pop Art Shop, 325 E. Campbell Ave., call 408.241.0001 or visit www.sonya.paz.com.