

dragon painted by the couple on the back wall, neither will they miss the amazing antique furniture. Dowries from China are the anchoring component of the store, which also carries "a lot of things other people don't have," adds Stapleton. "So there is really something for everyone." Worth noting: the gummy sushi and Botan Rice Candy with edible rice paper wrapping.

It's not only adults who relish Stone Buddha; kids flock to the store as well, the couple say. Some come in every day after school for the sweets and the Japanese card game "YU-GI-OH," which they are "totally obsessed with," smiles Stapleton. YU-GI-OH mania is so out of control, "we're working with the YMCA...so they can have a place to have YU-GI-OH battles."

Outside Stone Buddha, Silverton is a town sprinkled with artists. About seven years ago a group of them—including Bianchi and Stapleton—got together and opened a cooperative gallery called Lunaria to display and sell works created by the townspeople. Stone Buddha's space is the old Lunaria, which has since moved down the street.

Also serving the community, Silverton has jumped on the Oregon artsy bandwagon with "First Friday" every month ("our biggest time for

sales," according to Stapleton). Stone Buddha stays open late and features an artist from the wall of locals highlighted in the store. All people who have any sort of connection to Asia—whether an ancestral link or the type of art they create—are allowed space in their shop.

**Stone Buddha is a super "dyke/gay boy magnet," Stapleton laughs. "They come out of the woodwork; it's really cool."**

"Silverton is very supportive of the artists in town," a reflection of the high concentration of artists living in the area, says Stapleton. "The local merchant group is really thriving and energetic."

Because of the collective town enthusiasm for First Friday, the couple have ordered a rickshaw—an Asian pull cart—to give tourists and locals rides around town. The kids will not only be introduced to this traditional form of transport, but it will also give them a way to earn extra money.

Bianchi and Stapleton, who happen to be the mothers of Portland TechnoDyke.com diva Stacy Bias, say Silverton is a quiet place where everyone knows each other. Despite its rash of conservative churches, being gay in the small town is a nonissue for the couple.

Stone Buddha is also a super "dyke/gay boy magnet," Stapleton laughs. "They come out of the woodwork; it's really cool."

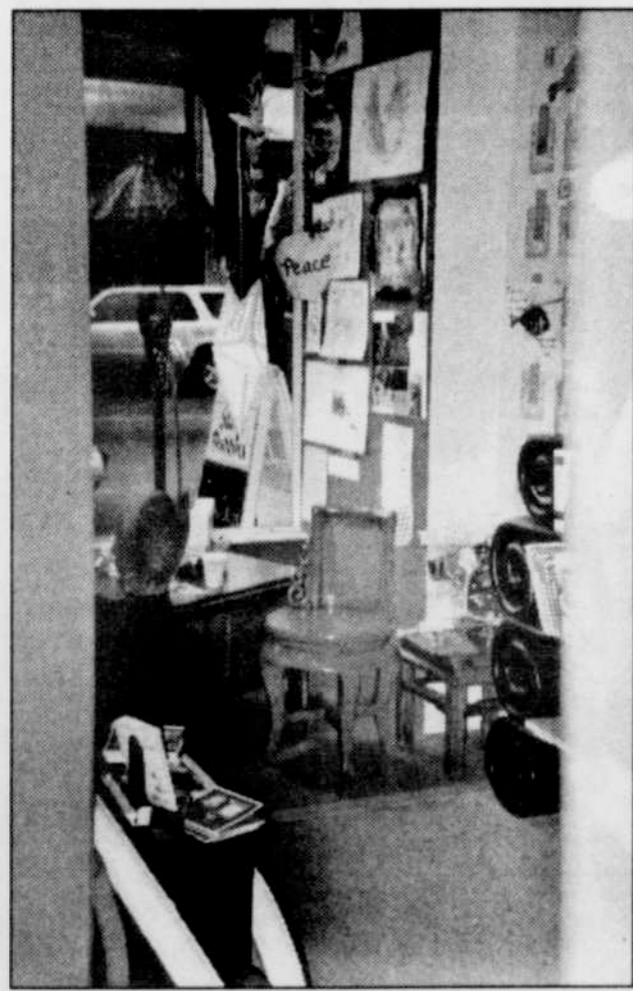
When not at Stone Buddha, the couple live in an old broom factory on the Silver River, less than a mile from the shop. With a stray dog named Zogi and cats circling the perimeter of their house frantic to get inside, both women find their muse here.

In her impressive bead shop, Bianchi creates Urban Relics Designs, eclectic ethnic jewelry that mixes nature, found items and the arts. As an X-ray technician, she also renders some amazing art from X-ray machines, enhancing shells and bird nests on the computer. And Stapleton works on a Japanese fish painting while creating collages and wall treatments.

As the continual stream of customers reveals, the ladies of Stone Buddha have most certainly hit a vein in Silverton, bringing a cut of the Orient to Oregon. "When customers ask, 'Why an Asian shop in Silverton?' my response is simple," says Stapleton. "Because we're here." □

Next time you're in Silverton, check out STONE BUDDHA at 216 E. Main St. Call the ladies at 503-873-0682.

GINA DAGGETT is not only a free-lance writer in Portland, she also burns nag champa religiously and eats an obscene amount of pickled ginger.



Take a peek inside the Stone Buddha tearoom

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