

A LETTER FROM THE ARTS EDITOR

Sometimes in our fair valley, it seems the only cultures deemed worthy of attention, or investment, are football and beer. Another gallery falls; another brewery rises. One more great local artist is lost to Portland — to opportunity — while Eugene funnels in more star players, more zealous fans and more Duck stuff.

Artists take heed: Paint your palettes yellow and

green and let your kilns cook only the most bulbous growlers.

Oh, we tease. But in our third year of producing the visual arts issue, ArtsHound, it's become clear that the best things — art that moves, heals, inspires and connects — come in quiet packages without much fanfare.

Many of the artists featured here work diligently holed up in their home studios. Finding them was

half the fun, and then we had to coax them out of their holes like the sly, talented foxes they are.

In this year's *ArtsHound*, we sought the art stories not often told, and artists and organizations whose names may not ring a bell, because they deserve a cheering section, too. Who knows, maybe we can get Eugene so excited about the arts that tailgating at exhibit openings becomes a new tradition. An arts editor can dream. — Alex V. Cipolle



SARA TALMADGE

Sara Talmadge remembers learning to draw before learning to write. “I took to anime and comics really early on,” she recalls. Even her current sketchbooks are filled with X-Men characters and Disney princesses.

The animator and illustrator has since traded her pencils for a drawing tablet, developing animation for local tech company RockYou, although she still carries a sketchbook wherever she goes.

Talmadge was born in Japan to a Japanese mother and American father, who encouraged her to pursue art from a young age, which she says was unusual in a place where the schools she attended focused more on math and science.

Before moving to the U.S. to study animation at the Savannah College of Art and Design, Talmadge found an artist community and developed an artist presence online. “That was actually probably my pivotal moment,” she says. “I started realizing there are other people like me and this is a thing I could do.”

In college, she experienced a positive culture shock, not from American society, but from suddenly being surrounded by like-minded artists and art.

“It was my first formal environment being with dedicated art teachers, art professors and dedicated art students,” she says. “It helped me find my focus really fast.”

After receiving a BFA in animation, Talmadge followed some classmates to Oregon and eventually was hired by Eugene's PushButton (now Spotkin), who put her to work for Disney Interactive's local office. Now living in Junction City, Talmadge commutes to RockYou in Eugene where she develops game animation.

“The game scene in Eugene is really vibrant, but a lot of people don't know about it,” Talmadge says. “I want to tap into and foster that kind of community.”

To see more of Talmadge's work, visit saratalmadge.com or follow the artist on Instagram @charapoo.

NEAL WILLIAMS

Browsing through Neal Williams' portfolio of band posters from the likes of Soundgarden, Queens of the Stone Age, The Black Keys, Dave Matthews Band and Interpol, you'd think he'd been honing his craft for a lifetime. Each one is hand-drawn, tweaked in Photoshop and printed by hand.

“I really didn't get into drawing until I turned 30, five years ago or so,” Williams says. “My 20s were spent at record stores, trying out some business, trying to do my own thing.”

Williams relocated with his partner to Eugene about a year ago from Atlanta. While working at a record store there, Williams fell in love with the hyper-detailed genre of gig posters.

“I got a ‘learn to draw in 30 days’ book right at the beginning,” Williams recalls. “Things hadn't been working out for me, and I knew that if I was going to make a go at this, I had to go at it hard.” He continues, “I was spending really late nights at first, studying people's artwork and trying to reverse engineer it.”

Before long, Williams was networking and gleaning advice from other gig poster artists.

“My buddy Justin said, ‘Send out 40 emails [to bands] in a night and maybe you'll hear back from one.’ I took that to heart,” he says. After a couple years, bands started contacting him. “The first band to reach out to me that really sort of knocked my socks off was Soundgarden.”

Shortly after arriving in Eugene, Ninkasi found Williams' website and contacted him to design a space-age label for Ground Control Imperial Stout with “space-traveled yeast.” The brewery went on to make Williams its first artist in residence, where he works directly with the Ninkasi art director and graphic designer.

“They're sort of my art community right now,” he says. “I'm definitely hoping to meet more people in the artist community.”

To see more of Williams' work, visit epicproblems.com or follow the artist on Instagram @epicproblemz.

