



One of the pieces featured in Braden's exhibit.

Continued from Page 6

"I just have this true love and appreciation for vintage objects, and for things that remind you of your past," Braden said.

Her process involves finding supplies first, then creating something from scratch. For custom orders, she creates her own rendition of what the customer wants.

Pulling heartstrings

Many of the pieces most notable to Braden are custom pieces. Being able to create artwork that is meaningful to someone and helps them cherish memories is what Braden finds most rewarding about her job, she said.

Braden's career has come with many surprises, but through it all, she discovered why people love her license plate guitars.

"They kind of pull on your heartstrings in terms of nostalgia. A lot of people remember their first cars. Our parents' generation especially, they always kept their license plates from their old cars," Braden said. "So, this is a way to get those license plates out of the garage and into their homes."

Profound portfolio

Participating in wholesale shows and being featured in smaller galleries led Braden to be featured in New York, Chicago, Miami and Seattle galleries.

Braden said the turning point in her career was her contract with Red Robin, where she



One of Braden's guitars, featured in the Trail's End exhibit.

worked on supplying each of their stores with art in a 5-year remodel plan. She felt that working with a large corporation had brought her into a more professional realm of art.

"I grew up going to the original Red Robin in Seattle. I would've never guessed in a million years that something I made with my hands would be in their restaurant," she said.

Some of her other corporate installations include VISA headquarters; Harley Davidson Motorcycle stores; The Grand Ole Opry and The Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee; Jack Daniel's Whiskey; Inn at The Fifth Hotel in Eugene; and Alta Apartments in Seattle.

Her work for Jack Daniel's includes being a featured creator at their Manhattan pop-up shop, where she did a live demonstration of how to build a guitar.

"I felt like a superstar," Braden said. "I just felt like belle of

the ball."

Looking forward

Recently, Braden has been quarantined in Gearhart. She said the extra time makes her feel grounded, inspired and ready to start creating art that is tailored toward her community.

She plans on continuing to work with mixed media and metals, focusing on complex and custom portraits next.

"I knew that I was supposed to be an artist," Braden said. "I was supposed to be doing this."

Continued from Page 3

carving out time. I started seeking out jobs where I could work four days a week and dedicate the fifth day of the week to writing. Even now, when I have my own business, I still have writing days. Those are the days that I really put down a word count.

I'll edit throughout the rest of the week. Right now I'm editing a book. It's hard to just sit down and edit. My days right now are half writing the book and half editing the book.

CW: What does your editing process look like?

AO: Usually I'll read my work out loud. Then, you can tell if the word flow sounds right. Sometimes I'll record myself. Things will jump out that you wouldn't have caught by just reading to yourself.

Then, I print out the piece and hand-edit. Then I sit down and re-enter the edits after I print it out. That can take two or three times.

I also work with a critique group. I feel really lucky; I stumbled across it. We have 10 minutes each week to read a piece. I'll read then get critiques and potential edits from the other members. I'll edit sometimes up until I read my piece during the group.

Taking critique is kind of like the next step in writing. As a writer, you don't know whether what you have is good. You send your piece out to people and some people are focused on an aspect of your writing that you're attached to or that is a piece of your voice. You have to take things with a grain of salt ... Sometimes people don't get your writing style and that's alright.

I can't react right away to my feedback. I have to process the critique. I have to get past my ego. Then I edit the pieces I see fit.

CW: Do you have suggestions for people who are interested in writing?

AO: If they're interested in writing, they

Try your hand at writing

This summer, Coast Weekend wants to feature your writing. Throughout the summer, we'll feature local writers through a fiction writing contest.

To start things off, send in a writing prompt of no more than 250 words to aevans@dailyastorian.com. All entries will be considered. One prompt will be selected and published in a later edition of Coast Weekend.

Readers will later be able to respond to the prompt, in turn creating a fictional story, separated by short chapters.

likely already have a story to tell. They have to have a storyline and whatever medium they're going to use. For me, I always have my notebook. It can be whatever medium. You need to be able to write your ideas down, mistakes and all.

When you go back, when you set aside writing time, you'll have that idea in the raw that you can work off of. If you can only write for eight minutes, write for eight minutes.

Remember, you have to have the utensil for your job. Just keep it with you.

Attending workshops is a really good idea for gaining new skills and perspectives. You're basically a student. There are so many workshops in the area. The more you can take the better.

And finally, have a trusted person take a look at your work and give you gentle feedback. There's constructive and deconstructive. Having them look at your work and point out your blind spots is only going to help you grow. For me, it helped having people show me what I was doing wrong. Don't be afraid to lean into the uncomfortable.

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