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ArtSEA: The Ellensburg art house 42 years in the making

Plus, Seattle Center says go skate or go home and new cultural venues are opening doors

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Dick and Jane's Spot, at First and Pearl in Ellensburg, is a domestic art project that's been in progress for 42 years. (Brangien Davis/Crosscut)

Last weekend, I took a trip east of the mountains and stopped in Ellensburg, a town I realized with some surprise that I had never visited. As with every [road trip I take](#), it was a good reminder to get out of city limits more often. Among the beautiful old brick buildings lining the historic downtown I was happy to discover **Gallery One**, a big airy space that in addition to main and mezzanine galleries includes a ceramics studio and artisan gift shop.

The current show (closing Sept. 25) is an auction exhibit featuring a lively mix of regionally made art. The items up for bid alerted me to several artists I wasn't familiar with, including Bellingham sculptor **Doug McKee**, whose hand-carved skateboards are fanciful yet functional – the one on display looked like a caterpillar with a Cheshire cat grin. I also learned about the two artists who'll be featured in the upcoming show **Almost Home** (Oct. 1-30).

Seattle-based fabric artist **Nina Vichayapai** is creating plush felt miniature replicas of everyday items, including houseplants, a kitchen timer, a Metro bus and a cup of Ivar's chowder. En masse, these items paint a personalized picture of domesticity – one that reflects homemaking as an immigrant. Wenatchee sculptor **Natalie Dotzauer** is contributing a wall-spanning "sugar quilt," which from afar looks like a traditional geometric pattern, but up close reveals a sweet sense-memory constructed of sugar lumps and Royal icing on molasses-stained paper.



The garage at Dick and Jane's Spot in Ellensburg is a hubcap haven.

And for a full-scale, no-holds-barred take on the art of home, there's **Dick and Jane's Spot**, which I discovered has been a work in progress for 42 years (and counting). The exterior and yard of this little red house at First Avenue and Pearl Street are covered in fascinating folk art created by owners **Richard C. Elliott and Jane Orleman**, with contributions from 40-some Northwest artists.

Industrial reflectors in geometric patterns, expansive bottlecap murals, a swirling brick chimney that appears to be mid-tornado and something that might be called a hubcap hootenanny — it resounds with joyful, unfettered creativity and reminded me that there are all kinds of ways to bring art home.



A sk8r performs a trick on one of Perri Lynch Howard's glass panels at the new Seattle Center Skate Plaza. (Susan Fried)

Back in Seattle, [new houses of culture continue to roll out](#) — literally, in the case of the newly opened **Skate Plaza at Seattle Center**. This long-awaited replacement for the old skate park (which closed in 2018) is a multilevel, 18,000-square-foot ode to street-style shredding. In addition to touted features like the “quarter pipe hip,” “hubba ledge” and “pole jam” there’s some stuff this nonskater can appreciate.

The center preserved and reinstalled the previous park’s laminated glass panels: colorful, delightfully scratchy-looking works — including a skateable glass ramp — that local artist **Perri Lynch Howard** based on high-res scans of worn skateboard decks. And embedded in the concrete are **Roark Congdon’s** cast bronze figures of skateboarders doing tricks.



Vivid Matter Collective has opened a new storefront gallery on Pine Street. (Daniel Spils)

Also recently opened in Seattle is the **Vivid Matter Collective** gallery (open Thursday-Sunday, noon-6 p.m.). This small storefront space in the Oddfellows Building on Capitol Hill is run by the [group of artists that created the Black Lives Matter mural](#) along Pine Street. Every two months, the jewel box gallery will showcase the work of one of the group's artists.

Up first is **Barry Johnson**, whose turbulent black-and-white iron oxide paintings of Black men are paired with gold sculptures of smashed basketballs. (For more of Johnson's work, check out the [huge façade pieces he recently installed at the in-progress Midtown Square complex](#).)

And during a Wednesday evening city walk I noted progress on the new [Volunteer Park Amphitheater](#). The old brick facility – long the backdrop for Shakespeare in the Park productions – is completely gone, and the new structure’s swooping roof shape is emerging. The city says it’ll be ready in November, just in time for rain-soaked theatergoing.

And so the city’s cultural landscape shifts and reshapes with the seasons.



"Snake Man," a print by Alison Saar in the show 'Mirror, Mirror' at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at Washington State University. (LA Louver)

If you're a Seattleite looking for more reasons to get outta town, consider a jaunt to Port Townsend for a terrific print show at **Northwind Art**. [The Printmaker's Hand V](#) (through Oct. 31) showcases the rich possibilities of hand-pulled print techniques, including lithographs, monoprints, silkscreen, intaglio, woodcuts, linocuts and collage.

This juried show, produced by [Corvidae Press](#) (the local printmaker's guild), features 60 works, including a striking murmuration of starlings, hand-carved in wood and linoleum blocks by Port Orchard linocut artist **Tina Juvonen**, and Seattle monotype printmaker **Rebecca Strabo**'s evocative Deception Pass landscape, which seems to fade in and out of the fog before your eyes.

Primo prints are on view in the other direction, too — at the **Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art** at Washington State University in Pullman, where the new show [Mirror, Mirror](#) (through March 12, 2022) features 50 bold prints by **Alison Saar**.

Known primarily for her mythical, folk-art influenced sculptures, the Los Angeles artist has also spent years creating lithographs, etchings and woodblock prints. In both mediums, Saar reflects the Black American experience in strong figures that reverberate with history both personal and political.



Fall print shows abound. Left: Tallmadge Doyle's "High Tides Rising XI." Right: Jueun Shin's "Underwater." (SAM Gallery)

And you can do a daylong tour of prints in Seattle, too. Consider the multilayered art of longtime Northwest artist [Jim Hodges at Greg Kucera Gallery](#) (through Oct. 9). In these recent works he uses a multitude of printing techniques to explore abstracted natural elements. At **Davidson Galleries**, it's all prints all the time, including a vivid new show of 1970s serigraphs by Japanese artist [Humio Tomita](#). These small abstract shapes appear to vibrate with saturated hues.

And at **Seattle Art Museum's SAM Gallery** (downstairs, next to the gift shop), the new exhibit [Rising Tides](#) (through Oct. 3) showcases the distinct styles of three Northwest printmakers exploring watery depths: **Tallmadge Doyle's** wavy underwater gardens are made with woodcuts; **Iskra Johnson's** pigment prints of Lake Powell are

suspended like hazy memories; and **Jueun Shin's** monotype, collagraph and collage images resemble deep dark undersea reefs.

I'll leave you with a few more reasons to mask up and head out:

Chinatown-International District's Night Market (which starts during the day) features an open-air experience of food, live music, martial arts demos, traditional Filipino dance, taiko drumming and Chinese yo-yo performance (Sept. 25, 1-9 p.m.).

On the Boards is offering an immersive in-person dance experience with **[Let 'im Move You: This is Formation](#)**. A collaboration of dancers jumata m. poe and Jermone Donte Beacham, this call and response movement is based on "J-Sette" dance styles and celebrates Black queer community (Sept. 24-25, 7 p.m.).

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist **Anthony Doerr** (*All the Light We Cannot See*) visits **Seattle Arts & Lectures** in-person at Benaroya Hall to talk about his buzzed-about new book, *Cloud Cuckoo Land*. (**[Sept. 28, 7:30 p.m.; also livestreaming](#)**).

And Seattle journalist **Marcus Harrison Green** talks about his new essay collection, ***Ready to Rise*** with Michelle Matassa Flores of the Seattle Times at Town Hall (**[Sept. 29, 7:30 p.m., in-person and livestreamed](#)**).

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