

Playfulness, fun showcased at Zinc

Edmonds owner scours artist colonies, vintage stores for displays at her shop

By Jennifer Sasseen

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The shop beneath the bright orange sign in downtown Edmonds is all about “making your world FUN to live in” — the tagline on the back of Laura Zeck’s business card. She’s the proprietor of Zinc Art + Object.

The store at 102 Third Ave. S., Suite B offers a mix of past and present, the cleverly designed and repurposed and the brightly imagined, crafted and illuminated.

It’s a testament to Zeck’s love of art, her many contacts in the art world and her willingness to hunt high and low, from artists’ colonies to vintage stores across the country, for her special finds.

“Often described as fresh, edgy and inspiring,” states the store’s website, “we are constantly on the hunt for the new, the unusual, the extremely well-made and that special something that will spark a conversation and a smile.”

There’s slapstick humor in the banana flasks (think Mae West’s, “Is that a banana in your pocket...?”) and in a tray of bottle-opener dentures, but there’s a lot more that’s useful and seriously sustainable, like wallets, Dopp kits and backpacks fashioned from used bicycle inner tubes and tires — naturally sleek and waterproof by Seattle company Alchemy Goods, started by a bike commuter who had his messenger bag stolen.

“He couldn’t find one that he liked as much as the one he had,” Zeck said, “but he had all these inner tubes lying around his apartment.”

Another story in the seemingly “meant-to-be” category belongs to Oxgut Hose Company, which Zeck said was started by a woman dating a San Francisco firefighter. At the station when a firehose was about to be scrapped, the woman salvaged the hose and eventually started a line of wine carriers and placemats sewn from old firehoses.

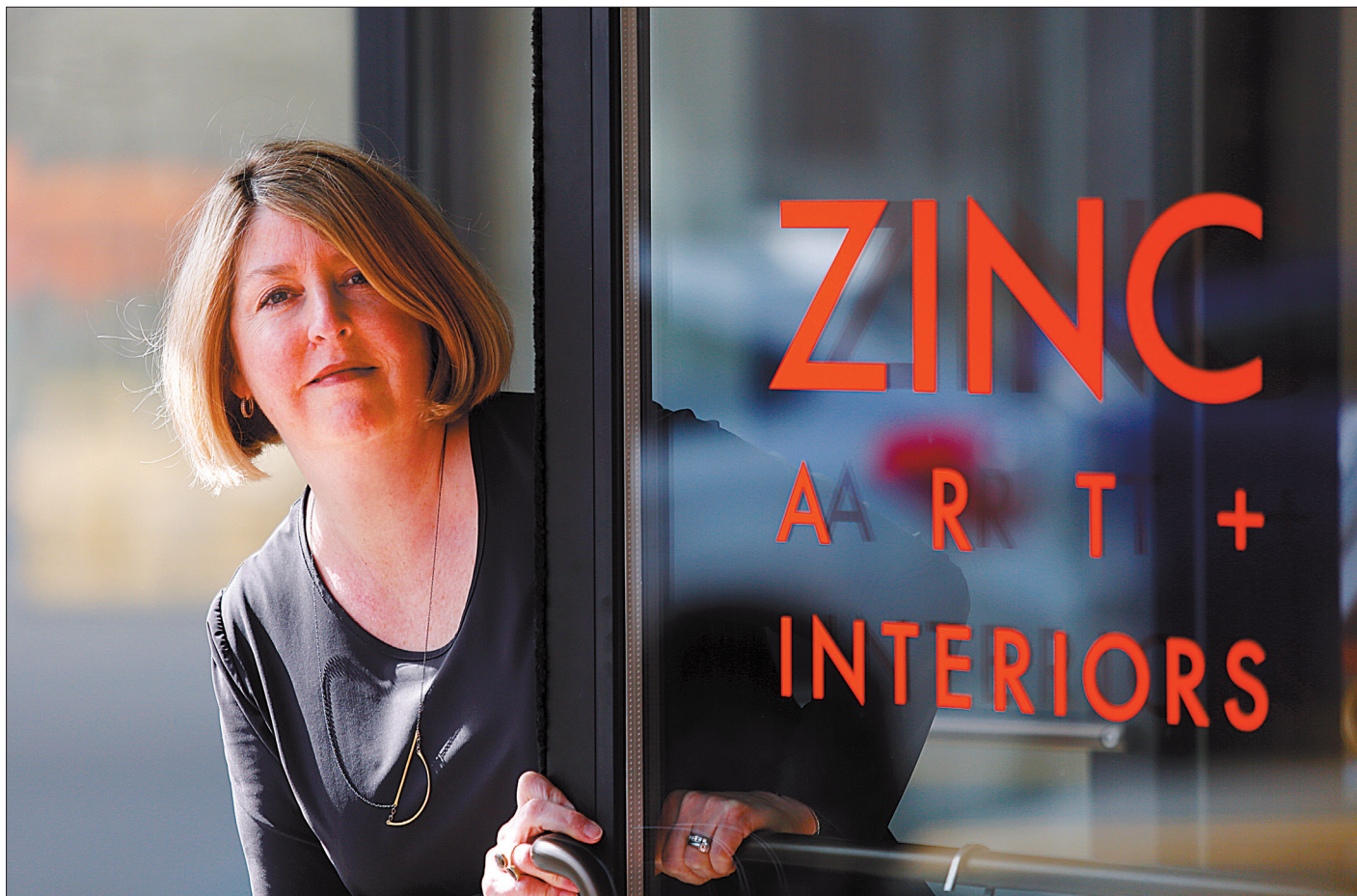
Yellow-gold in color, the wine bags for sale at Zinc are “cool, they’re functional, they’re ‘reuse, recycle’ and, at the same time, they do something good,” Zeck said.

Oxgut Hose Company — based in Emeryville, California and named for the ox gut used in the first known firehoses in ancient Greece — donates a portion of sales to the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation, to help child burn victims, according to oxgut.com.

“Just as much as we love finding new life for fire hose, we love honoring its original purpose: saving lives.”

That gives her chills, Zeck said.

An artist in her own right, Zeck’s “The Secret Life of Seeds” painting hangs on the wall at Zinc and was recently featured in North End Metro Magazine, with



PHOTOS BY DAN BATES / THE HERALD

Owner Laura Zeck got the “retail itch” and started Zinc Art + Object three years ago. The business, which is changing its name from Zinc Art + Interiors, offers a mix of art and furnishings with an emphasis on fun.

“I wanted to show artwork because I love art, and I think investing in real art versus posters is important for our culture.”

— Laura Zeck

Zeck, 47, named one of its top five favorite artists.

Three years ago, Houzz.com featured a Ballard interior-design project of Zeck’s as Kitchen of the Week.

The store’s name comes, in part, from the zinc plates — backed in orange — that Zeck etches on in her print-making, she said.

Her husband, graphic artist Jesse Doquilo, 55, who co-owns the shop with her, is also well-known in the region. His modern-object wood furniture, featuring strong grains and dramatic angles, is for sale at Zinc.

The collection includes side tables called Gracer tables, named for the couple’s 10-year-old daughter, Grace.

Zeck said they met while he was president of the 700-plus-member Seattle chapter of the American Institute of Graphic Artists. Zeck had just finished her graduate degree at the University of Washington in fine arts, painting and printmaking, had been hired by Filter — which places graphic designers, illustrators, project managers and the like in



At Zinc Art + Object in Edmonds, a backpack made with used bicycle tires offers a sturdy, messenger bag with the bonus of coming from recycled materials.

contract and other positions — and was sent to a meeting of the graphic artists group.

She and Doquilo started working together on a committee and got along well, Zeck said. When she discovered he owned a painting by one of her favorite artists — famed Northwest artist Fay Jones — she said she knew he was the man for her.

The couple bought and remodeled a house together in Seattle’s Central District, Zeck said, but moved to Edmonds in 2007, not long after Grace was born.

When Zeck lost her studio space

because the building that housed it sold, they decided to open a shop.

“We just always kind of had that retail itch,” she said.

The store opened in December 2013 as Zinc Art + Interiors, because she thought the name might dovetail with her interior-design business, Zeck said. Instead, it was confusing to potential customers, who expected a showroom on the site. So the name is in the process of changing to Zinc Art + Object.

Some of the objects include Adirondack chairs made from plastic milk jugs, hanging lights mimicking bubble-wrap,

and chocolates from around the world. There's jewelry from local silversmiths and bead crafters, artisanal handbags from Brooklyn-based artists, and honey from a local beekeeper in the business of removing unwanted bees and wasps from buildings. There are "found photographs" of strangers, enlarged and framed, hanging on the wall, a result of Zeck's forays into vintage stores.

"I have a thing for somebody else's memories," she said.

There's a couch built to last generations, from a Mukilteo company that builds eco-friendly, made-to-order furniture to reduce waste, practicing and teaching the Japanese "Kaizen" method of continuous improvement.

A "Cavalletta" chair by the same company perches on a table at Zinc Art + Object. It can be ordered in a variety of fabrics and has three different leg choices; this one is in a shade called blossom and has white legs to play up its delicacy.

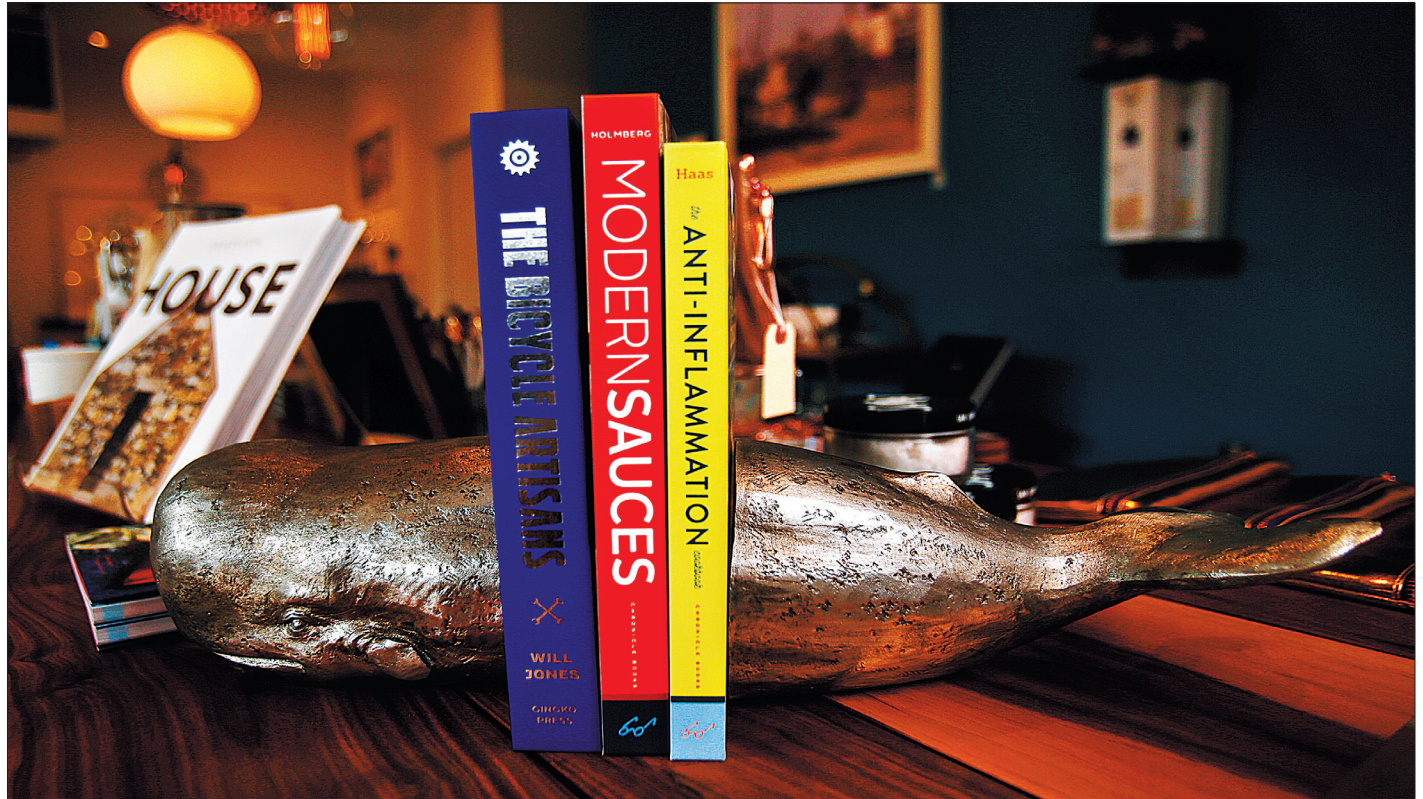
"It's very curvaceous and it's got a zipper up the back and it kind of reminds me of a female figure," Zeck said.

And like so many things in her shop, it's somewhat more than an object.

"It's like an art piece too," Zeck said, "so that's why we have it sitting on a table — so you don't miss it."

Impossible to miss is the gallery space adjacent to the retail shop and entered through a wide, open doorway. The gallery was added in November, Zeck said.

"I wanted to show artwork because I love art," she said, "and I think investing in real art versus posters is important for our culture."



Two halves of a whale makes a unique book holder for sale at Zinc Art + Object in Edmonds. Owner Laura Zeck scours artist colonies and vintage shops looking for her merchandise.

The space recently featured "The Archivist of the Sky" by Philadelphia artist Deidre Murphy, who attended the Kansas City Art Institute with Zeck. Her displayed paintings portray brightly colored birds perched on brown twigs and dotted lines, against bold backdrops of dark pinks and brilliant blues.

Posted next to the paintings, a series of numbers referred to possible "install-

ment" payments, Zeck said. If buyers think they can't afford \$3,600 for a painting, she explained, they might feel better breaking it down into three installments of \$900 or nine installments of \$400.

Her goal is to show people "that buying art is worth it," she said, "and it's not that much different than having a car payment."

As for Zinc, it's still a labor of love. Zeck

said she has two "awesome" employees that she pays, but has yet to pay herself, even pouring everything from her interior-design projects back into the store.

"It's a marathon," Zeck said of the business. "It's not a sprint kind of a thing."

And it's all about bringing FUN into her customers' lives.

As she said of art, "If you love something, why wouldn't you invest in it?"

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