

## The art of beer

By Alandra Johnson / *The Bulletin*

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In Bend, beer culture is seemingly everywhere. It has even spread to the art world in increasingly creative ways.

Two Bend artists have turned to beer for inspiration — one painter and one jewelry maker.

Karen Eland paints with beer, while Denise Harrison uses beer foam as a template to create abstract-looking metal jewelry.

### Painting with beer

Beer wasn't the first unique medium Karen Eland used in her art.

More than a decade ago, while living in Oklahoma, she started painting with coffee. Eland was sitting in a coffee shop and watched the dark espresso come out of the machine and she was struck by the lovely color. A longtime water colorist, Eland wondered if she could create art with coffee. The answer was yes.

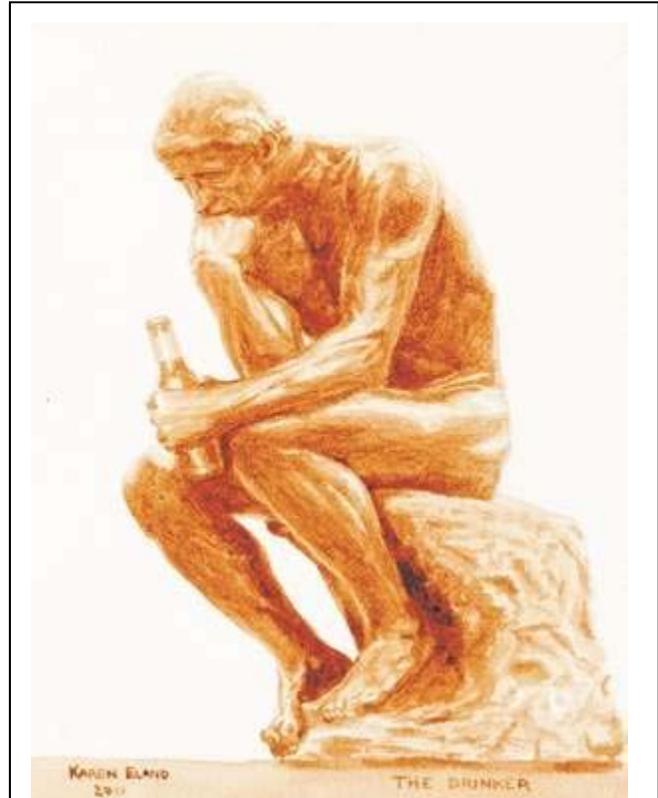
She found she could use coffee to create many shades of brown, as she layered the liquid onto her paper to create darker and darker hues. The resulting paintings appear almost like sepia-tone photographs.

Eland, 39, chooses her subjects in part based on whimsy. She enjoys remaking classic works, but with a twist. She has inserted coffee cups into the "Mona Lisa," for instance, and Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring."

Then, five years ago, Eland came to Bend. "I didn't even like beer before I came here," said Eland.

But that changed. Soon she was sipping pints with fellow Bendites.

Naturally, she decided to try her hand at painting with beer. It worked well, but the darker beers — stouts and



Ryan Brennecke / The Bulletin

Karen Eland put a twist on Rodin's masterpiece in her work, "The Drinker."



porters — show up much more than lighter lagers. She likes painting with Deschutes Brewery's Black Butte Porter and S1nistor Black Ale from 10 Barrel Brewing, among many others.

Eland was recently commissioned to create large-scale paintings for the recently opened Worthy Brewing Co. The paintings show close ups of beer ingredients — hops, barley, yeast and water from Tumalo Falls.

"It's fun to paint that way," said Eland. Every once in a while she starts to miss painting with color and will work on an oil painting. But for the most part, she says she is happy to work with the tans and browns of beer and coffee.

Eland has used the beer painting technique to recreate photos from a 1920s Tour de France, with bicyclists drinking beer, as well as lumberjacks from long ago cutting down old-growth timber while sipping pints.

The paintings have a nostalgic quality. She says she is drawn to the older style and look rather than modern styles.

Working with beer can have its challenges. In order to make a darker color, Eland brushes on more and more layers of beer. But erasing a color is difficult. She can add water, but it doesn't work well. "Once it's there, you have to work with it."

It takes about two pints to make a typical painting, although it depends on the amount of shading required. Afterward, she puts a coating on to seal the painting, which means any beer scent disappears, which is probably good since most people don't like the smell of stale beer.

In general, Eland says, people seem to enjoy her work. She is able to work full time as an artist. She does some commission work and also sells her work online at Etsy.com, as well as at her studio in the Workhouse in Bend and at some festivals.

Eland says people often do a double-take when they realize her work is made out of beer; some ask silly questions.

She's heard a lot of jokes of "Can I lick your painting?"

Karen Eland put a twist on Rodin's masterpiece in her work, "The Drinker."



Photos by Ryan Brennecke / The Bulletin

Karen Eland took a page from a familiar photo for her painting "The Lager Loggers."



Photos by Ryan Brennecke The Bulletin

Pieces of Denise Harrison's collection titled "Beer Speak" are on display at her studio at The Workhouse in Bend.

Looking ahead, Eland hopes to keep creating new art with beer. She would like to make a map of the Ale Trail using beer as well as a poster for each associated brewery.

She can also see herself doing more commercial or advertising work, both in beer and coffee.

Eland doesn't take her work too seriously — she understands it is a novelty, but it's one she enjoys.

"Coming here showed me the craft involved in beer ... this is almost a way to celebrate that," said Eland. When she sees the beautiful dark, rich color of a stout, she wants to honor it.

Some people joke that the paintings are a "waste of a beer," but Eland sees it differently. The paintings are her way of saying: "I salute you; You are worthy of a permanent painting."

### Foam to form

Denise Harrison, 43, was a chemistry major in college and considered herself the least artistic person in her family. But while Harrison, who worked in the computer industry, couldn't draw or paint, she was always attracted to making things with her hands in her spare time. She made her own candles, cards, soap and more.

In 2007, after her daughter left for college, Harrison took a metal class at Central Oregon Community College. She was hooked. Soon she took every class that was offered in metals — repeating some over and over — for two years. Harrison loved the craft, from working with the metals and the tools to the feeling that she could always learn more. In 2009, Harrison attended her first First Friday Gallery Walk where she sold her jewelry. From there, making jewelry grew from hobby to addiction, she jokes.

The hardest part for Harrison was always coming up with her own designs. Then Harrison happened upon a book from her grandmother, who used to be an art teacher. The book included a section about patterns in nature. She was able to use some of the patterns to create a pattern for jewelry.

The pattern gave the jewelry meaning; it was "more than just adornment," said Harrison.



Karen Eland uses beer to create a painting in her studio at The Workhouse.



BELOW: Harrison measures the thickness of a mold f

ABOVE: Denise Harrison works on cutting a wax mold for one of her sterling silver jewelry pieces in her studio.

Harrison found a way to utilize photographs to create metal jewelry. First she strips all of the color then prints the image onto a special paper.

She then transfers that pattern into copper using an acid bath. From there, she uses an etch plate with jeweler's wax to form pieces of metal into jewelry. The result is very textured and abstract. But the embedded meaning of the original image is there for those who know it.

That is how Harrison came to make jewelry out of beer foam photographs.

Harrison and her husband are big beer fans. "Beer kind of holds a special place in my heart," said Harrison. The couple enjoy going to special beer tastings and events; they travel to tour breweries and have gone to beer education classes. "It's something we would search out," said Harrison.

During all of these beer- related events, Harrison took photos. She joked that you could read the foam left in the pint glass like people read tea leaves.

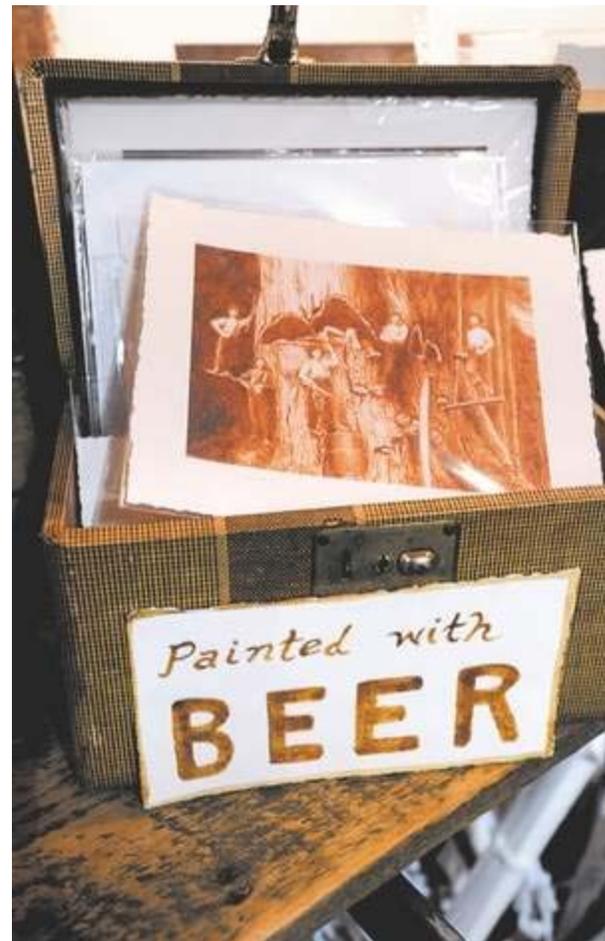
She realized that she could use one of her photos of beer foam in a glass to create metal jewelry.

The resulting rings, necklaces and earrings have a strong, abstract effect. She also uses photos of her travels and other interesting images to create jewelry. Harrison says people "love the beer (jewelry), especially in Bend." The beer-inspired jewelry are some of her biggest selling items.

Some people have requested Harrison make jewelry out of a specific beer, which she enjoys. She says she is always willing to go have a beer with someone. Harrison was able to quit her day job last year, but she is "still working on breaking even" to pursue her expensive craft. She says she is grateful for her supportive husband. She sells her work online at Etsy.com as well as at her studio at the Workhouse, not far from Eland. You can also catch Harrison at numerous local festivals and gatherings — and don't be surprised to see her at a local brewery.

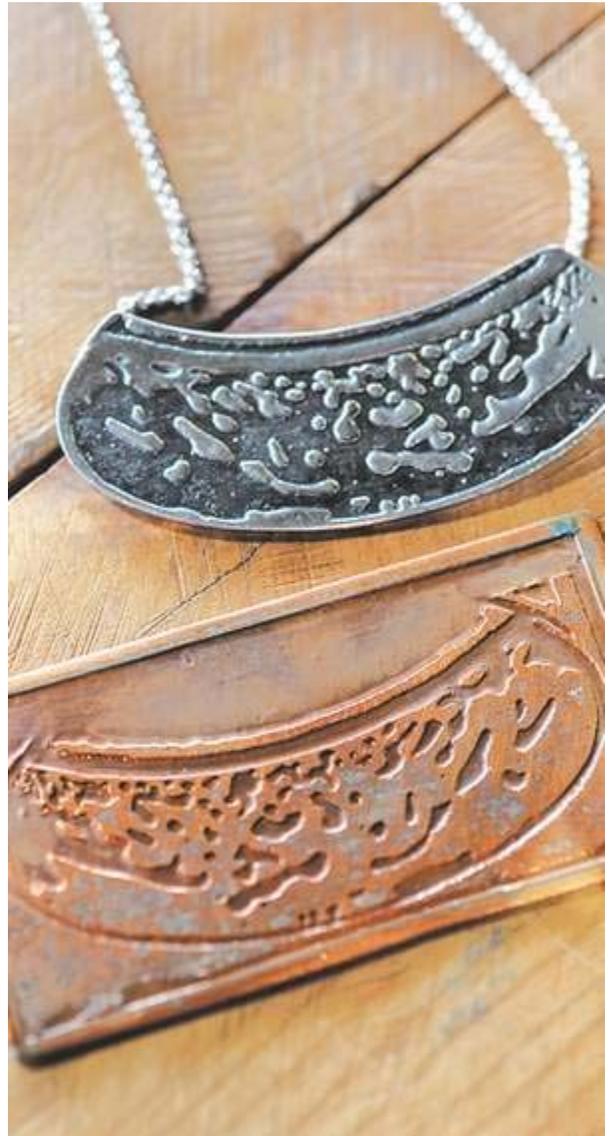
"I try and have fun and find where the beer is," said Harrison.

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Photos by Ryan Brennecke / The Bulletin

Karen Eland took a page from a familiar photo for her painting "The Lager Loggers."



Harrison crafted this sterling silver piece from a pitcher of beer.



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ABOVE: A series of wax molds used by Denise Harrison for making her beer themed sterling silver jewelry pieces in her studio at The Workhouse in Bend. RIGHT: A piece from Harrison's "Beer Speak" collection on display at The Workhouse.

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## Karen Eland

See more of Karen Eland's work at [www.beerpainter.com](http://www.beerpainter.com) or visit her Etsy shop at [www.etsy.com/shop/BeerPainter](http://www.etsy.com/shop/BeerPainter) (she has other dedicated sites for her work with coffee).

### **Denise Harrison**

See more of Denise Harrison's jewelry at [sterlingechoes.com](http://sterlingechoes.com) or visit her Etsy shop at [www.etsy.com/shop/SterlingEchoes](http://www.etsy.com/shop/SterlingEchoes).