



Published on October 16th, 2014 | by Eva Revear

0

Chandler O’Leary’s roadside attractions come home to the Handforth Gallery

Roadside attractions: you may remember them from long car trips across the country or random trivia nights with friends, but you probably haven’t encountered them as fine art. Tacoma artist Chandler O’Leary of Anagram Press is working to change that with her latest show Drawn the Road, which features a variety of sketched roadside attractions from all over the U.S and Canada.

Though some might think that hotels shaped like animals or museums devoted to root vegetables may be tacky and a little silly, O’Leary feels there’s something to them that makes them inspiring as art.

“They have such popular appeal, they shouldn’t be ignored,” she said. “They should be taken seriously as a part of American history.”

Drawn the Road, which is running until October 25 at the Tacoma Public Library Handforth Gallery, features 30 pieces from the roadside attractions series on O’Leary’s illustrated travel blog, called Drawn the Road Again.

O’Leary started the blog one year ago after a friend prompted her to share the many water colored sketches she had created over the course of years’ worth of travel.

The show’s sketches are ordered in the gallery as on the blog, by thematic grouping, instead of chronologically. “I like to tell the story,” O’Leary explained. A walk around the gallery will take viewers through massive animal statues, giant foods, and building shaped like teapots, which are just a few of the roadside attraction categories represented.

The blog also features landscapes and other sights the artist encountered as she explored the country. “I’m interested in everything and the best way to see that is in a car,” she said.







O’Leary travels with friends or family, but she also enjoys solo trips that allow her to spend a lengthy amount of time sitting and sketching things like the 38 foot tall fiberglass cow statue inNorth Dakota, which she said is one of her favorites.

Back to Top ↑

Thank you to our sponsors



What we're reading:

-  Learning to love the Cross Orbweaver Spider
by Katy Evans | under CITY LIFE
-  Washington rules: why Washington State is better than your state
by Joe Korbuszewski | under CITY LIFE
-  What LOVE has to do with it: Spectrum Dance Theater at Tacoma’s Armory Building
by Amanda Caple Melton | under THE ARTS
-  Destiny City Comics debuts in the Stadium District
by Chris Piers | under CITY LIFE
-  Cocktails through a stillsuit: a toast to Frank Herbert
by Katy Evans | under THE ARTS
-  Dear US Navy: don’t use our rainforest for war games; don’t irradiate our endangered species
by Katy Evans | under CITY LIFE

She likes to do as much of the sketching on site as possible, then fill in with watercolors later.

Though her inspirations come from extensive research into the community of aficionados that surround roadside attractions, O’Leary said a lot of her best pieces come upon her by accident. “I try to build in time to be surprised,” she said.

Oftentimes locals will notice her drawing, and come to tell her the histories of the attractions, much of which she shares on the blog.

But whether she is sitting in the car in 20 degrees below zero weather, sketching the world’s **largest ball of twine in Minnesota** or watching **Minnesota beauty queens have their likeness carved into 100 pound blocks of butter**, each sketch is meaningful because, for O’Leary, the images provide a link to each place she’s been. She said that the act of sketching brings her close to the materials in a way that photography does not.

“There’s an earnestness to [roadside attractions] that I love,” she said. To her, the 14 foot frying pan in Long Beach or the potato museum in Prince Edward Island are just as exciting as pieces in the fancy art museums of New York City.

This is in part because of what they mean to the often small town locals for whom the relics are part of history and tradition. “People love these



Illustration by Chandler O’Leary from drawntheroadagain.com

wanted to be an animator but when she started studying the field, she realized it wasn’t for her. O’Leary experimented with a variety of art forms including dark room photography and puppetry and she found that she had a passion for storytelling and drawing.

After studying typography at Rhode Island School of Design where she got her fine arts degree in Illustration, and working with graphics while living in Minnesota, O’Leary landed in book arts and lettering. There, her in-house studio brand, **Anagram Press**, was born in 2004. O’Leary produces hand lettered stationary and other paper goods that sell in many retailers across the country as well as online. She divides her time between Anagram Press and her sketching and has big plans for the Drawn the Road blog.



Illustration by Chandler O’Leary from drawntheroadagain.com

things,” she said, “They’re town treasures.”

Though Tacoma may not have as many such treasures as O’Leary would like, the artist and her husband fell in love with the city and are happy to have settled here.

The couple decided to move to Tacoma six years ago; O’Leary grew up in a military family and this is the longest she has ever lived anywhere. For her, it’s been a great place to do art because of the enthusiastic community interest and participation. “I’ve lived in a lot of places, and haven’t seen this type of support [for the arts],” she said.

O’Leary has been drawing for so long that she can’t remember what brought her to it. Growing up, she

- Radical Roots: talking Home with Justin Wadland
by Rachel Ervin | under THE ARTS
- If you’ve got it, haunt it: celebrate Halloween with the Tacoma City Ballet
by Lorraine Constantine | under THE ARTS
- Dress accordingly with eTc Tacoma
by Bryce Smith | under THE ARTS
- Neko Case is Still Elusive
by Daniel Rahe | under Music
- A guide for the solo diner in Tacoma: where to go, where to avoid
by M.L.Flanagan | under Food/Drink
- Rock in a hard place: Tacoma’s struggling independent music scenes
by Katy Evans | under THE ARTS

Thank you to our sponsors





Illustration by Chandler O'Leary from drawntheroadagain.com

O'Leary's next big journey will happen this summer when she and her husband head down old Route 66. She's spent days researching and planning the 2,000 mile, three week trip and is most excited to see the beagle-shaped bed and breakfast in Idaho. Although O'Leary plans to see all fifty states (she has nine to go) and all of the national parks, there is no real end goal for the blog.

"I just want to get to as many places as I can see," she said. "If I ever get tired of doing this that'll be a really sad day."

O'Leary's reception will be on October 16 at 5:30 in the Handforth Gallery at the Tacoma Public Library downtown. You can also view her blog at any hour here: drawntheroadagain.com

Tacoma Public Library
1102 Tacoma Avenue South
Tacoma, WA 98402

Closed Monday & Sunday
Tuesday & Wednesday 11 am – 8 pm
Thursday-Saturday 9 am – 6 pm

All illustrations by Chandler O'Leary

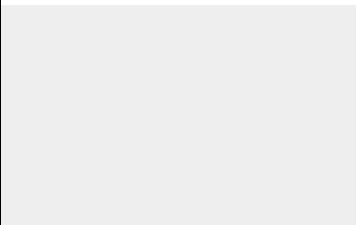
Help us grow. Spread the word. Share this Post Defiance article with your friends.



[Tweet](#) 5 [Like](#) 3 [+1](#) 0

Tags: [Anagram Press](#), [art blog](#), [art show](#), [Chandler O'Leary](#), [gallery](#), [gallery opening](#), [Handforth Gallery](#), [Moleskine](#), [road trips](#), [roadside attractions](#), [sketches](#), [Tacoma Arts](#), [Tacoma Public Library](#), [Third Thursday](#), [watercolor](#)

About the Author



Eva Reveal Eva Reveal is from Puyallup, but spends most of her time in Tacoma where she studies Communications and Computer Science at the University of Washington Tacoma, and works as Editor in Chief of the university's newspaper, The Ledger.



Comments & thoughts

Rich on Wildly Breathtaking: You Won't Believe What Post Defiance Got Away With in 2013

5 Question Friday With Michael Fitzgerald from Destiny City Comics | on Ten things I learned about life from "Death: The High Cost of Living"

Joey on Tacoma needs a law school like I need a hole in the head

Dee on Tacoma needs a law school like I need a hole in the head

Heather on Mod Curio and Moss + Mineral make a neighborhood of art

Maria Jost on See Noah Struthers' Fantastic Guts

Harold G. Moss on Waiting for the note, or some thoughts on World Suicide Prevention Day

Dennis Flannigan on A guide for the solo diner in Tacoma: where to go, where to avoid

Morf on Parkland is (still) burning

Rize on I hate your balls

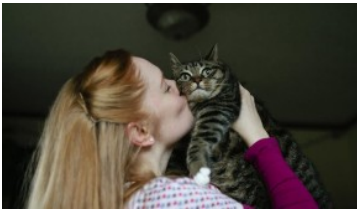
Defiance in your inbox

Subscribe to get Post Defiance newsletter style; we'll make sure you don't miss the good stuff.

Related Posts



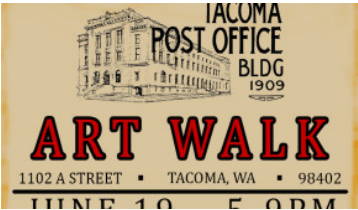
Mod Curio and Moss + Mineral make a neighborhood of art →



Third Annual Be Kind to Animals →



The poverty of grief and the splendor of crime: Toy Boat Theatre will break your heart with their incendiary “Maids” →



Ten arts events in one at the Tacoma Post Office Building Art Walk →

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Name *

Email *

Website

Comment

You may use these [HTML](#) tags and attributes: <abbr title=""> <acronym title=""> <blockquote cite=""> <cite> <code> <del datetime=""> <i> <q cite=""> <strike>

Post Comment



Post Defiance Archive

Select Month

Recent Comments

Rich on [Wildly Breathtaking: You Won't Believe What Post Defiance Got Away With in 2013](#)

[5 Question Friday With Michael Fitzgerald from Destiny City Comics](#) on [Ten things I learned about life from “Death: The High Cost of Living”](#)

You can find us on

Twitter, Facebook, GoodReads, Pinterest, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Popular Tags

Art	Beer	Broadway Center
Christmas	City of Tacoma	
Downtown Tacoma	Film	
Fulcrum Gallery	Hilltop	
Hilltop Kitchen	History	

Joey on Tacoma needs a law school like I need a hole in the head

Dee on Tacoma needs a law school like I need a hole in the head

Heather on Mod Curio and Moss + Mineral make a neighborhood of art

Kings Books	Music	Poetry
Shop Tacoma	Spaceworks Tacoma	
Tacoma	Tacoma Art	
Tacoma Art Museum		Tacoma Arts
Tacoma Celebrity		Tacoma Music
The Grand Cinema		