



*Ojai Laundry*, acrylic on wood, by **Catherine Lee Neifing**



## Sojourner Café: Catherine Lee Neifing's **Coastal Color**

By **ERIN J. SMITH** / CASA

**L**IKE WALKING INTO MAGICAL LITTLE WORLDS, each of Catherine Lee Neifing's paintings has its own story to tell. *Coastal Color*, a selection of Neifing's colorful, narrative artwork, is currently on display at the Sojourner Café through May 15th. As part of this month's 1st Thursday, there will be an artist's reception at the Sojourner on May 7th from 5 to 9pm.

"My work is about the mystery of imagined places," said Neifing. "I love how art is free to interpret the world and connect to the people in it. Besides the joy of creating art, there's the joy of communicating the good things about the world."

Neifing grew up in the San Francisco Bay area and has strong memories of going to the boardwalk, the Winchester Mystery House, and the Mystery Spot. She's

always lived near the ocean, and it shows up in nearly every piece she creates. Her father, an artist who made his living creating neon signs, was an important early role model. "It was great having an artist as a father," said Neifing. "He really opened my eyes to the visual world. He showed me patterns in nature and made me aware of my surroundings and the beauty of the natural world."



**Catherine Lee Neifing**

Because of her father's business, Neifing's backyard was full of bright neon signs of every shape and color—a virtual wonderland for a young creative mind. "I had no barriers," she said. "Art didn't have to be square, but it could be any color and shape."

Neifing went on to earn a BFA from Humboldt State and an MA in Education and MFA from San Jose State. She is now a full time artist and has taught art classes at Allan Hancock College and Cuesta College. She splits her time between Pepeekeo, Hawaii and Arroyo Grande.

Neifing works in many mediums, including mixed media, pen and ink, colored pencil,

pastels, photography, collage, and ceramics. While Neifing often paints on canvas, she also experiments with shaped and layered wood. Many of her creations start as photographs of places she's found in the world, like her piece *Ojai Laundry*, but

she always adds her own whimsical touch.

"I want people to feel like there's hope and joy," she said. "There's beauty in everything—depending on how you look at it."



*The Garden Path*, 42" x 56" canvas, by **Catherine Lee Neifing**

Sojourner Café is located at 134 E Canon Perdido St and is open Mon through Sat, 11am to 11pm, and Sun, 11am to 10pm. For information, call 965-7922 or visit [www.catherinelee.com](http://www.catherinelee.com).