



Arts + Culture — Culture — A gonzo guide to great gifts (that will help...

ARTS + CULTURE | CULTURE

## A gonzo guide to great gifts (that will help local spots survive)

Everything you need: unique art, mouthwatering chocolates, radical guidebooks, nifty clothes, and brave women of color

By MARKE B. — DECEMBER 7, 2020

'Untitled (Geometric Blocks)' by Yang 'Baurin' Yu Zhen, available from Creativity Explored



**FOG CITY NEWS** I usually top my shopping whirl off by scoring treats for everyone, and myself, at **Fog City News** downtown which is [a perpetual Best of the Bay winner](#) for its staff and chocolate selection. (They have a great selection of gifts and of course magazines as well). I reached out to Adam Smith, Fog City proprietor, about what the comfortingly sweet institution had in store, and got this mouthwatering response:

“My top recommendation for this holiday season is a 12-piece gift box of bonbons from Oakland chocolatier [Michael Mischer](#) (support him at his Oakland storefront as well). We’ve been doing business with him almost since the day he went into business in 2004 and he custom-makes this box for us. His bonbons have a thick shell (so lots of “snap”!) with a soft filling inside (a nice contrast). Michael is German and what he’s done is translate his favorite holiday flavors into bonbons. The **Lebkuchen** piece is named after the spicy honey cookies sold during the Christmas season in Germany. It’s a great rich, gingerbread flavor that’s not too strong on the spice or the sweetness. Picture a gingerbread flavor that’s got aspects of baked cinnamon apples and pumpkin pie too, and throw in a little chai tea! The **Pfeffernusse** piece (say that 5 times fast!) is based on another German holiday cookie and Michael’s particular version is green cardamom, white pepper, and almond butter. It’s lighter and less sweet on the palate than the Lebkuchen bonbon. Besides the cardamom flavor, there’s an intriguing pine-like flavor, and then throw in some lemon, lime, and mint flavors too. We’ve been telling customers for years that Michael’s **Marzipan** bonbon will RUIN you because it’s so fresh (we order it every month)—it’s got a softer texture and has a more vibrant flavor than all the marzipans made in Germany (touting their long traditions of making it) but which are shipped all over the world, made often MONTHS ahead of when a consumer actually eats them. It’s really not even a fair comparison. And his **Champagne** bonbon is over the top! Picture a filling of heavy cream, butter, white chocolate, milk chocolate, champagne, AND a brandy-soaked raisin in the center!

“We’re open weekdays Noon-6:30, and Saturdays Noon-5pm, until Xmas. Curbside pickup, or phone order (415-543-7400) and we ship via USPS anywhere in the country. [This is our Flickr page](#) to see all the zany holiday cards and fun little gifts and gadgets we carry.”

Ever knowledgeable about the small business landscape, Adam also recommends some other local shops that could use your help:

[Alexander Books](#) (the LONE independent bookstore in the FiDi AND Union Square now)

[Patrick & Co.](#) paper goods and small gifts (how many 100+ year old biz do we have left?)

**Jeffrey’s Toys** on Kearny (they’re the oldest toy store in the city now)

**Terrasol** (terrific gift shop now on California, around the corner from where they were on Polk for 15 years)

**One Half** (everyone’s secret store on Polk)

**Molte Cose** (another wonderful independent gift store, also on Polk Street)