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San Francisco Chronicle

# Isabella Kirkland and the glories of the shell-less mollusk

By Leah Garchik | March 29, 2016 | Updated: March 29, 2016 2:23pm



for big tournament

2:29 PM

**Tiny Alameda arcade lights up**

2:24 PM  
**What's on TV this weekend, March 31-April 3**



Macdonald, author of 'H Is for Hawk,' at Books Inc.

2:05 PM

**Helen**



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Isabella Kirkland's painting "Nudibranchia" illustrates 206 species of the colorful shell-less mollusks.

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"Shell-less marine mollusk" may not be a phrase that evokes rapture, but that's because you haven't seen them. Artist and natural world observer-advocate **Isabella Kirkland** gave a talk at the Interval last week, one focus of which was her painting, "Nudibranchia," of 206 species of those mollusks. There are somewhere between 3,000 and 6,000 species known.

The creatures portrayed in Kirkland's painting are arrayed, life-size, from smallest (at the top of the canvas) to largest. This gives the viewer the feeling of seeing something in perspective, but that illusion is a trick of the eye and the brain, not true. With similar effect, Kirkland's series of paintings of species nearing extinction or already

extinct are precise, meticulously accurate, but not realistic. The species still living may not live in proximity and, also, may not be as vivid as they are in reality. Kirkland's style is based on that of 17th century Dutch still-life painters. These scenes of nature are more gorgeous than real life.

Kirkland's talk was one of a series at the Interval at Fort Mason Center, downstairs from headquarters of the Long Now Foundation created by **Stewart Brand** and **Daniel Hillis** to explore long-range issues of planetary survival. Foundation executive director **Alexander Rose** presides over the bar, and guests are greeted as though arriving in a living room.

In keeping with the foundation's purpose, Kirkland said her own motive was "to get people excited, engaged." Her work is intended, she said, to explore "how we are thinking of our relationship to the natural world."

P.S.: As to Rose's cafe management role, he said the cocktails were meant to evoke time and place. I glanced at the cocktail menu, and I'd like, oh, anything fruity. The bartender made a Hacker's Club, which Rose described as a drink invented at "an Eastern bloc computer hacking school." I thought he was kidding, so I asked which country. Estonia. Seriously.

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**Prince Harry praises powerful women, but not a word about Granny**



**Stanlee Gatti honored, scholarship funded in a few taps at CCA**



**Mill Valley students get food delivered to the schoolhouse**

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•The results are in: The Oakland Museum of California's White Elephant Sale raised \$2.13 million; and the Christie's auction of items from the De Guigne Collection raised nearly \$2.59 million.

•In the Bay Area section of last Friday's Chronicle, observant reader **Tim Lynch** noticed that a story about "historic graffiti" on Alcatraz being repainted so as to be preserved was

on the same page as **Chuck Nevius'** column about the city pressing charges against **Cozy Terry** for graffiti.

- **Andrew Gold** suggests a Fox News one-hour TV special, “The Real Wives of the Republican Presidential Candidates,” starring **Melania Trump**, **Heidi Cruz** and **Karen Kasich**.

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There’s more to symphonic success than artistic aesthetics. It’s fun to see anything take off, whether it’s a rocket NASA is sending to space or a baseball lofted into the stands by a slugger.



Photo: Stefan Cohen / Stefan Cohen

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The San Francisco Symphony in the SoundBox program “Outré.”

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And that was the feeling Friday at “Outré,” a San Francisco Symphony concert in the SoundBox, its newish performance space. The music was serious and seriously varied, but

the venue is informal; drinks and light snacks are served. The performance starts at 9 p.m., the seating — first come first served — is mostly on round settees or ottomans with limited back support, and the tickets are only \$35. Visionaries must have planned all of these strategies — time, seating, refreshments — to pack in younger audiences. And, borrowing a word from the 12th century composer **Pérotin** — his work was performed by a male choir — alleluia, that’s exactly what happened on Friday night.

Someone broached an idea, some committee gave it the green light, a lot of people worked on it, and it turned out they were all pulling in the right direction. The concert was terrific — standouts were flutist **Tim Day**, pianist **Robin Sutherland** and oboist **Eugene Izotov**, percussionist **Jacob Nissly** — and the quality of the music was aided and abetted by the vibes of success.

In the main auditorium of Davies Hall, the Symphony was participating in a crowd-pleaser of a different nature, an evening devoted to the movie “E.T.” The acoustics — thanks to Meyer Sound — worked well; and in the SoundBox, there wasn’t the slightest murmur of audible music in the adjacent hall. I’m sure the people who attended the “E.T.” event had just as good a time as we did. But it felt like the cool kids were in the SoundBox.

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## PUBLIC EAVESDROPPING

“I think your mom would look great with a nose ring.”

Woman to woman, overheard at a card shop on Piedmont Avenue in Oakland by Becky Conzett



**Leah Garchik**

Features Columnist

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