Balancing Act
A temporary fusion of stone

LAST SPRING, a clerk at the Bellingham Public Market was ringing up my bell peppers and carrots when I saw them: the rocks. By the front windows, beyond the check stand, stood piles of stones that appeared to defy gravity. The rocks were stacked, one on top of the other, seemingly at odds with the laws of physics. I asked the checker about the display. “Oh, those,” she replied. “Pretty amazing, aren't they?” On closer inspection, I could see the rocks were not attached with glue, metal rods or wire. The sign explained that these stones used gravity and balancing to hold them together. (It also pointed out that the display was temporary.)

The stacked rocks were the work of Bellingham resident Shane Hart, who began to defy the laws of nature 12 years ago at San Diego's Seaport Village. He says he doesn't have an art degree and taught himself how to balance stones. Hart began balancing stones at Boulevard Park in January of 2007. A crowd gathered and began asking him questions. Since then, Hart has spent as many as 12 hours some Saturdays creating rock sculptures on the park's beach. He says this kind of “performing” is new to him.

Since his first foray at Boulevard Park, Hart says he always gathers an audience when he works. After the Public Market displayed his work last May, the interest in his balancing act has steadily increased. People have offered to buy his art, but do not understand the sculptures are only temporary.

“Impersonance is actually an important lesson,” Hart says. He creates stone art as a metaphor for life's ephemerality and notes onlookers are amazed he spends so much time working on something that won't last.

Most of the sculptures average five feet in height, yet each is unique and can take up to an hour to build. Hart uses rocks he finds in the areas that he works. All his creations at Boulevard Park use stones from the beach and no two are ever alike.

A strong breeze or a heavy footstep can cause Hart's sculptures to tumble, but he says he likes making art he's not tied to. “When I'm done, I take it down and I am free.”

By Jory M. Mickelson

Balancing Act
Temporary fusion of stone

Village. He says he doesn’t have an art degree and taught himself how to balance stones.

These stones used gravity and balancing to hold them together. (It also

On closer inspection, I could see the rocks were not attached with glue, metal rods or wire. The sign explained that these stones used gravity and balancing to hold them together. (It also cautioned touching the stones would cause them to topple.)

The stacked rocks were the work of Bellingham resident Shane Hart, who began to defy the laws of nature 12 years ago at San Diego’s Seaport Village. He says he doesn’t have an art degree and taught himself how to balance stones.

“The first time a rock clicked into place, I was hooked,” Hart says on