

'Through the Lens of an Artist' Exhibit at THT Gallery

Submitted by JoAnn Lieberman



"Oakland" by JoAnn Lieberman



"Gone" by Shelia Reid



"Spider Web at Night" by Kara Navolio

The Lamorinda Arts Alliance premier photography show, "Through the Lens of an Artist," will run through Feb. 20 at the Town Hall Theatre Gallery in Lafayette. Works by Bill Klaproth, Jan Lainoff, JoAnn Lieberman, Cynthia McLoughlin, Kara Navolio, and Shelia Reid include black and white and color photos inspired by nature, travel and nostalgia.

Klaproth's passion for preservation has taken him to six continents to

witness and photograph the flora, fauna and landscapes that are deemed fragile, threatened and worthy of preserving. Klaproth hopes the special moments he captures on film encourage others to become stewards of our threatened planet.

Lainoff uses photography for a variety of purposes – to capture an image that she will later use in a painting, as an unbiased lens to view the progress of a canvas and as a contemplative study of the faces, figures, textures and bold lines that dominate both her photographic and mixed-media work.

Lieberman is drawn to the abstract and the history that hides just beneath the surface in the world around her. Her paintings and her photography both celebrate the juxtaposition of old and new – the contrast between a smooth surface and a rough layer of rust and peeling paint, the effects of aging on wood, masonry and metal.

Navolio looks to nature for inspiration in her work, whether it's for subject matter of just for the creative energy that comes from being in nature. "I often take a very close vantage point to zero in on the beauty I see," she says, "whether it's in the vibrant colors or the intricate details created by nature."

McLoughlin's nostalgic Ferris wheel photos strike a chord with those who fondly remember the county fairs and the amusement parks of youth. "Photography has often been the vehicle I use to capture a moment, composition or color combination as inspiration for my paintings," she says. "But sometimes the composition, quality of light and precise detail make a stronger presentation as a photograph than a painting."

For Reid, photography is her way of connecting with the natural world that she loves: "It moves me to get closer, linger longer to simply stay present in that world as she reveals her photogenic wonders." Her passion for photographing the outdoors naturally leads her to travel through rural lands and towns, places she finds compelling to photograph.

The Lamorinda Arts Alliance has been providing art to Town Hall Theatre for over a decade. It is Contra Costa County's biggest venue for emerging artists, hosting between six and eight shows per year.

Venue: Town Hall Theatre Gallery, Lafayette
Dates: Now through Feb. 20
Hours: Monday through Friday, 3 to 6 p.m. and one hour before performances
Show: "Through the Lens of an Artist"
Price: Free

Local Volunteer Business Advisors Boast of One Client's Success

By Sophie Braccini



Larry Tessler Photos provided



Jim Philpot

When Ciara Stockeland, a young entrepreneur from Fargo, North Dakota, was invited in October to the White House to hear President Obama speak and to testify in front of the Senate on behalf of small businesses, Moraga resident Larry Tessler felt like a proud grandfather. Not that the 30-year veteran in corporate retailing has any family relationship with the young mother. But for the past 10 years, he and fellow Score advisor Jim Philpot have been advising Stockeland – starting when she and her husband, Jim, opened their first retail store, then when she developed it into a franchise. Score is a nonprofit organization staffed with high profile, mostly-retired business people who volunteer to offer their expertise to serve others.

In September, prior to her D.C. adventure, Stockeland also received the Score Franchise of the Year award. Tessler feels that Score can offer great service for free to businesses like the Stockelands' across the nation.

"She first approached me via email in December of 2005," said Tessler of Ciara Stockeland. "She was a young mother with two children. She had no success in finding stylish maternity wear in Fargo; she had to go to Minneapolis to buy her clothing. She wanted to open a maternity store, but she had no retail experience." Tessler mentored her along the way as her business evolved into an off-price fashion clothing business.

As her business grew, she established herself as a franchisor. Then Jim Philpot, a Moraga resident as well as a Score colleague, came in and offered his franchising expertise. Mode, Stockeland's store, now has 12 units operating from North Dakota down to Kansas and over to North Carolina. "Jim and I continue to aid her when needed," adds Tessler.

In 2006, Stockeland opened her first retail store, Mama Mia, in Fargo. And in 2007, a company that had a lot of designer cloths overstocked that they needed to liquidate approached Jim Stockeland and Ciara decided to open a second store, Mode, next door to the original Mama Mia. "The consumers in Fargo really liked that outlet deal so in 2008 we decided to merge the two concepts, and bring the outlet into the boutique environment and created Mode as you see it today," Stockeland said in an interview for Score. Tessler says that what makes Stockeland successful is that she had a passion for what she does and the people she meets. Philpot explains her franchising achievement is due to the fact that she picked franchises that were in her image and stuck to the same game plan. "Ciara says that she will have 75 franchises in five years; I believe she can do it," adds Tessler.

The relationship that was set 10 years ago with the volunteer advisors continues today. Ciara Stockeland says that she can go back to Philpot and talk to him about digging into the unit level economics of each of her franchises, making sure that they can grow their businesses the same way they were able to grow the original Mode store. Today she advocates for the franchising model. That is why she testified in front of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on Oct. 6, asking the committee to support legislation to reverse the National Labor Relations Board's decision to alter the "joint employer" standard for businesses, which will force the Stockelands to take more direct control over employees of the franchisees. This could make small businesses like theirs larger and jeopardize their ability to successfully operate as a franchise business.

For periodic business tips, go to the Score Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ScoreEastBay/>. Tessler, a Score mentor, can be reached at larryst39@comcast.net.

Strange and Silly Sightings on Lamorinda Rooftops and Beyond

By Cathy Dausman

Searching for something out of the ordinary as the year ends? Sometimes you need not look any farther than in Lamorinda's own backyards!



Rooftop Homage to the Force

Colby Powell's family likes "Star Wars." A lot. Why else would the Lafayette residents have constructed a Death Star atop their house? The show-stopping light show became a media darling in the weeks leading up to the release of the newest installment about a galaxy far, far away.

Photo Cathy Dausman



Insects on Steroids

Lamorinda Weekly writer Vic Ryerson spotted this overgrown caterpillar "off the beaten track" at the Pease home in Orinda. Perhaps it could be featured in a sequel to author Lewis Carroll's book called "Alice in Lamorinda Land." Another piece of art has a dragonfly adorning an oversized leaf in the Pease's backyard.

Photo Victor Ryerson



Citrus Fingers

In this Moraga backyard, the art is of a more natural variety. This odd looking citrus looks as if someone gave a lemon a jolt of electricity. The Buddha's fingers, or fingered citron, is nearly all rind. It can be used simply as a good smelling decoration or the rind can be used in cooking or to flavor alcoholic drinks, says Moraga resident Thomas Delfino. Either way, it gives new meaning to ordering a drink with "a twist" of lemon!

Photo Cathy Dausman