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'Precision Beauty' at Moraga Art Gallery

By *Sophie Braccini*



Painting by Karen Kramer; jewelry by Kuniko Kay Nitta Photos Sophie Braccini

The title of the new exhibition at the Moraga Art Gallery expresses acutely what the two featured artists are all about: precise and finely crafted art, where the beauty emerges seamlessly through the enormous amount of work needed for the art's completion. Karen Kramer's watercolor paintings and Kuniko Kay Nitta's jewelry are on display now for all to enjoy as part of the "Precision Beauty" exhibit through Aug. 11.

Upon entering the gallery, one is drawn to the left wall of the space where Kramer's paintings hang. Her most recent work is on display, always inspired by nature, but also by movement. The colors, the shapes, draw the viewer into Kramer's universe. It is a sensual world where the softness entralls the spectator.

endless contradictions within the same landscape: light/dark; arid/wet; and living/dying; adding that she passionately examines this harmonious paradox and is transfixed by the complex tapestry of nature and its constant flux.

In the gallery, the talented painter offers some small pieces that are incredibly reasonably priced and some larger paintings as well. Kramer said that she sees

Kramer works with watercolor paints and pencils, ink, and charcoal. Her inspiration is always the natural world. It can be very descriptive as seen from up close, representing a group of leaves or branches with berries. These works are very whimsical and lead to a fairy tale reverie. Her landscapes are more majestic, but with the same soft quality and unique colors that may not be completely natural, but never appear fake. Her art is both inspirational and highly decorative.

The jewelry pieces by Nitta evoke a very different feeling than the paintings. Semiprecious stones are carved and finely polished by the artist before being embedded in remarkable necklaces and earrings.

The artist says that it is also nature that inspires her, especially that of Japan where she was raised. The technique she uses creates the cabochon-style gems, meaning polished instead of faceted. Nitta explains that she works the stones with five different grinders for hours before the stones ultimately reveal their potential immense beauty. Looking at each gem can be quite intoxicating; the glance loses itself in the natural intricacy of the stones.

Nitta creates necklaces with the stones she polishes by setting them using different techniques including very thin metal strands that lightly and elegantly hold the stone. The final result is stunning.

The Moraga gallery also features several of its other members. Pam Murray presents some of her new very unique collages, Chanda Beck her ceramics, and Sandra Berkson her whimsical abstract paintings, among other interesting art.

The gallery is located at 522 Center St. in the Rheem Shopping Center and is open Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, visit moragaartgallery.com.



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