

Published December 11th, 2019

Moraga Art Gallery: reincarnated in time for the holidays

By Sophie Braccini



The gallery Photo Sophie Braccini

feature many artists at the same time while giving each the space their work deserves to be well highlighted.

Ehrenhaft is a painter who is a longtime member of the artists co-op and he tells how the gallery lost its space to a new consignment store. The center's management proposed the site next to Tangelo's that was a bit small for the artists, and then mentioned the 2,400 square feet available between Dover Saddlery and Nation's. This specific spot is believed to have been a karate studio and a bank. Now cleaned up, repainted, lighted and furnished by the gallery members it is a very attractive and effective showroom. Current president Lucy Beck commented that the shopping center's management treated them very well and that the group feels grateful. Of course the generous move comes with a counterpart: the gallery would have to vacate should a paying tenant manifest.

But at the moment the sword of Damocles does not dampen the optimistic mood of the artists and, in fact, the group that shrank from 12 to six artist-members is now boasting 20, many of the new ones being former members of the Lafayette Art Gallery that closed several years ago.

A large number of the old and new members' works are on display now in Moraga, creating a symphony of creativity, colors, shapes, styles and mediums that is very invigorating. Painters such as Debbie Koonce, Carla Gerlbaum, George Ehrenhaft and Lucy Beck who were original members are displayed alongside new members like Irene Nidoba and her passionate surrealistic imagery; very interesting abstract painter Susan Erikson; and simple while mysterious landscape painter Jill Landau. Additionally, for this season exhibit called "Serendipities," the gallery welcomes guest painters such as Graig Crossley, who presents his lively abstract work.

Paintings are on the walls, but all around the gallery creations of wood workers, ceramists, jewelry makers and more are on display. Carol Balala's lovely felted wool soaps can be purchased; a large metal mammal by guest artist sculptor Joe Bologna is on display; woodwork guest artist Rick Nelson presents very creative and beautiful inlaid turned wood bowls; MaryLee Miller, the latest artist to join the gallery, presents her skillfully created ceramic decorative balls. The bronze and ceramic sculptures of the incredibly talented new member Judy Bolef Miller attract a lot of attention, and make sure not to miss her bronze "Liberty and Justice" statue.

Very different styles of jewelry are on display, from creations by Kay DeGroot, who designs necklaces and earrings around unique pendants and beads she has collected around the world, or the delicate vegetable parchemin jewelry that Margaret Dorfman invents. Coasters, cards and scarfs are also some of the items that can be found in the gallery.

A separate space is still unused and ideas are being proposed by the collective such as transforming it for art classes or offering it as an exhibition space for high school art class students.

During all of December the gallery will be open every day - including weekends - from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and is staffed by member-artists. More information at moragaartgallery.com.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA