

Moraga art exhibition all about trees



Woodwork by Duke Herrero

Photos Sophie Braccini

selected pieces that are set in the woods and use the presence of trees to infuse a serenity and soft poetry to his descriptive aquarelles.

Visitors will take a stroll from the imposing grandeur of Yosemite, to deeper undergrowth, to streams encumbered by fallen trees, until reaching the painting of a stump in the woods, an axe still set on its surface, the perfect transition to the second part of the exhibition, where the cut trees have now become planks and are given a new life through Herrero's woodwork.

Herrero said he took his first woodworking classes in college, but stopped for 30 years before taking it up again nine years ago. Within this relatively short period of time, Herrero has equipped himself with the tools and worked his craft to a level quite amazing coming from the home of a local resident. Not only does Herrero create lovely wood objects such as cutting boards, candle holders and wood utensils, but he also fabricates antique looking furniture and boxes featuring amazing quality marquetry using a variety of trees such as walnut, cherry or cocobolo. The day after the



exhibit opened on March 24, Herrero had already sold two-thirds of the pieces he had brought to Moraga. Luckily, he has many more creations to restock the gallery.

Herrero explained to his friends at the Moraga Art Gallery that his dental career required the same focus, hand-eye coordination, and attention to detail that are needed to make the perfectly adjusted wood inlays. He added that his art is a way to honor the spirit that once lived in the trees.

The gallery's show, which also includes work by its 14 member artists, will run through June 1. Hours are Wednesday through Sunday, from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, visit www.moragaartgallery.com or call (925) 376-5407.

By Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Art Gallery's most recent exhibit, "Into The Wood(s)," is a springtime tribute to trees, featuring painter George Ehrenhaft and woodworker Duke Herrero at the Rheem Shopping Center in Moraga through June 1. At first glance, the works of these two very different artists and friends are appealing for their beauty and excellent craftsmanship, but the exhibition also invites a deeper reflection about the majesty and wisdom that trees bring into our lives – in nature and/or as material beautifying our living environment.

Ehrenhaft is a longtime member of the Moraga Art Gallery collective and has exhibited there a few times already. This time around, as he invited his woodworker friend Herrero from Orinda, he has



Painting by George Ehrenhaft

'Woman at War' – one ordinary woman's relentless fight for the environment

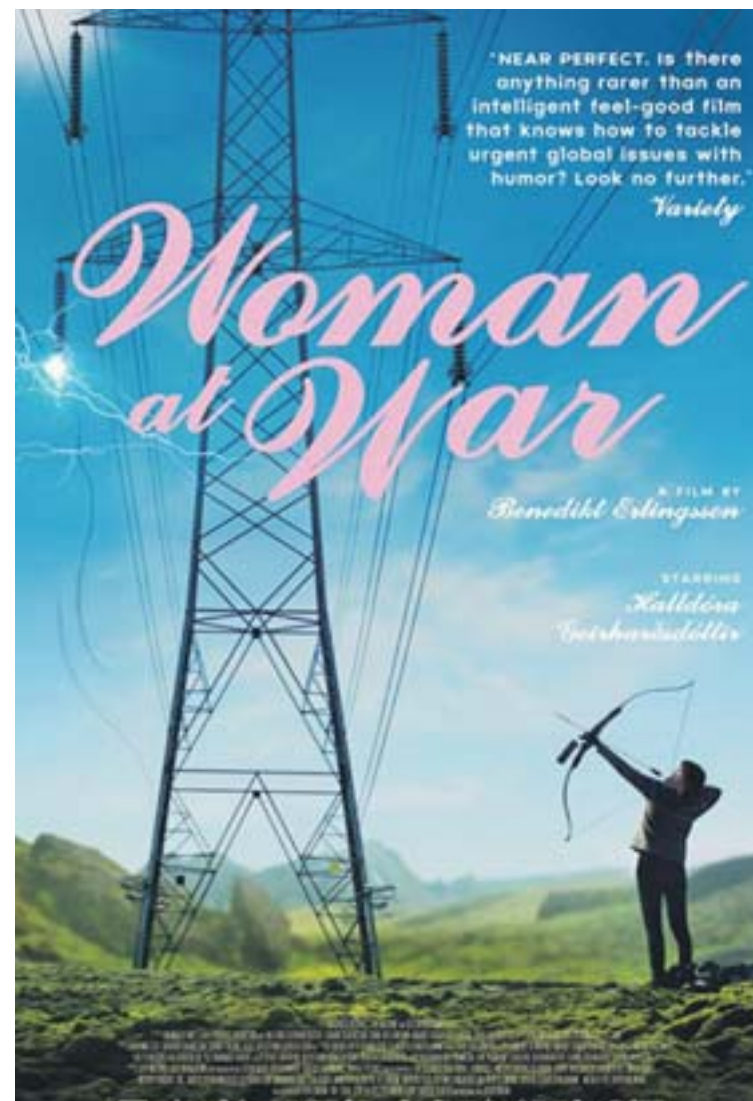


Image provided

By Sophie Braccini

It is the offbeat humor that creates the delightful pleasure when watching the film "Woman at War" ("Kona fer i strid"), starring Icelandic actress Halldora Geirhardsdottir and her limpid green gaze. In this story, Halla, a woman in her 50s, fights against an aluminum industry giant that is threatening the beauty of the Icelandic natural environment and polluting the grounds. With a single telescopic cable Halla cuts off electrical installations and blocks the entire production facility. Then starts a game of hide-and-seek with the drones that are sent to find the intruder.

"Woman at War" is much more than a film about a su-

perhero converted to ecology. This second feature film from Icelandic director Benedikt Erlingsson has neither sex nor blood, but is a political tale with quirky, sometimes rightfully biting humor.

Halla is soon nicknamed by the local media the mysterious woman of the woods, but all the while Halla leads a double life – sometimes a saboteur, and the rest of the time a charming and congenial choral master. Her life gets an added complication as she tries to adopt a baby daughter from Ukraine, and her twin sister is about to leave for India.

In the magnificent natural setting of Iceland, Halla the activist is followed by a group of

free jazz musicians, mute supporters of her cause. There are many interesting secondary roles surrounding Halla, most of whom do not know about her secret fight, and they are part of the many surprises that will delight viewers up until the end.

Erlingsson is a wonderful storyteller who has composed a rich saga in wild Iceland. Nature itself is a character in this movie. It can be hostile when it drenches Halla with icy showers as she flees, it can protect her when she finds a sheep hide to fool the drones, and it can heal with its warm springs.

Erlingsson is the heir of Icelandic medieval storytellers that wrote the long sagas of 12th century heroes. In this movie Erlingsson stages the life of ordinary people, who through single acts of bravery become heroes, at least for a brief moment. The director shows people who act more than they reflect. In "Woman at War," Halla's fight for the environment is acted out, not discussed. The name of Halla links to the rich history of Iceland: it is the name of a 17th century bandit who survived for 20 years in the highlands of Iceland.

Geirhardsdottir, who portrays Halla, is a surprising newcomer to the silver screen, at more than 50 years old. She was a well-known live theater actress, but had never been cast in a movie. Her presence, her beauty, as she transforms from a simple woman next door into a warrior, is unique and moving.

"Woman of War" is a must see. It is brought to Lamorinda as part of the International Film Showcase that features a notable foreign film almost every month in the East Bay. The movie will open at the Rheem Theatre in Moraga on April 12 for one week, and will show at the Orinda Theatre starting April 19 also for one week.

More information at www.lamorindatheatres.com.

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