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## Of awe and oddness

By *Sophie Braccini*

Tom Gehrig with one of his paintings at Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery in Lafayette Photos Sophie Braccini

called Reconnoitering - Confusion Hill. Gehrig portrays how humans try to explain and measure a world that is full of confusion, trying to make sense of and control the unknowable. His art is both food for the soul and for the brain, getting us to think and create our own narrative with what he offers.

Aust explains her art by citing an anonymous quote: "In times of great complexity, embrace simplicity." Her canvases are peaceful to view, even if they represent people lost in the sky in their little canoe way above the seas. The light she creates, the delicate colors bring serenity where peril and danger could be felt. The artist says that her paintings start with a feeling, such as being overwhelmed by having to do the impossible every day. She relies on her painting as a visible manifestation of an invisible reality. She also offers it to the world as a prayer of hope.

Maddigan's sculptures are most intriguing, surprising and ultimately beautiful. She creates make-believe stuffed trophies out of placemats, packing leftovers, all types of recycled materials and toys, transforming them by adorning forms that a taxidermist would actually use, and building magical and highly decorative creatures.

Moore comes from the world of book illustration and says each of her portraits tell a story, sometimes a dark one. It is a door opening on the world of fairy tales.

Perlmutter, who is both a visionary and a successful businessperson, has once again created an enchanting ground for an afternoon summer stroll.

Recommended for all ages, the exhibition will run at 3620 Mt Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette through Sept. 1. The gallery is open Wednesday through Saturday, from noon to 6 p.m. and by appointment. For more information, visit [jenniferperlmuttergallery.com](http://jenniferperlmuttergallery.com).



Painting by Carol Aust

The mysteries and beauties of life are celebrated at the Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery this summer. As someone who always surprises and delights, the painter and gallery owner has invited artists to illustrate different aspects of surreal representations. Paintings by Tom Gehrig, Catherine Moore, Carol Aust, and sculpture by Southern California artist Emily Maddigan share the stage at the Lafayette venue.

Gehrig's paintings have an engaging and subtle surprising quality. The Marin County painter explains that he composes his paintings like a stage where he sets his characters. The first impression is of simple awe for the beauty of the natural world. Nature in its most serene expression is presented there: a calm sea, a blue sky and soft clouds. Going deeper into the observation of the work, elements of oddness begin to emerge. What are those dark clouds coming forth? What is the surveyor doing there? Is that a boat pushing a lighthouse? What is going to happen to that weather balloon? The painting is



Sculpture by Emily Maddigan

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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