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Art on the wild side

By *Sophie Braccini*



Josie Osolin (second from the right) with friends in front of her paintings. Photos Sophie Braccini

Some people in Lamorinda do not even know there is an art gallery in Moraga; with its front entrenched deep under a wide dark eave in the Rheem Shopping Center, it does not look like much to passersby. But don't let the outside entrance fool you. The new Moraga Art Gallery exhibition that opened on Aug. 15 will tickle and surprise those who venture inside.

Called "Walk On the Wild Side," the exhibition features work by three dynamic artists with plenty of creativity and gumption: abstract painter Josie Osolin, glass artist Terry Ow-Wing, and gourd-sculptress Jenn Norpchen.

Osolin is the member of the gallery who invited the other two to join this show. She explains that she loves art that's dramatic and uses powerful colors. She met the two guest artists in shows around the Bay Area and invited them to join her.

The painter is self-taught and started a new art career after taking early retirement from Pacific Bell. She said it took her three attempts to dare buying paint after entering an art store. But as soon as she started, she found herself and her style. Painting with large strokes of paint, Osolin starts with an inspiration of colors. It is always early in the morning and she feels that the image on the canvass takes a life of its own with each new color spot.

Osolin says that she is more of an introvert, but there is nothing subdued about her painting. The images are full of life and movement and are highly decorative.

The two artists exhibiting with Osolin could not be more different from one another.

Norpchen creates whimsical sculptures out of gourds. She lets the form inspire her and with paints, metal, and other additions, she transforms the natural shapes into birds, frogs or dragons. Her creations are full of humor, charming and bursting with warm colors. They intrigue and are sure to bring a smile.

Ow-Wing is an architect who loves glass and has a remarkable sense of colors and shapes. She creates beautiful glasswork panels, the shape of small windows with modernist portraits made of fused glass. There again, creativity, imagination and vibrant colors create an energizing imagery. The techniques used by the artist are quite developed and require different stages from the composition to the final fusing in a kiln.

The exhibition runs through Oct. 20 at the Moraga Art Gallery, which is managed by a collective of local artists and is open Wednesday through Sunday, from noon to 5 p.m.



2-Jenn Norpchen and her whimsical gourds.

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