

Published November 11th, 2020 Artify Orinda hopes to beautify utilities in Orinda By Sora O'Doherty



Artist Kath Balamuth and Maggie Boscoe, chairperson for the Artify Orinda project. The painting, which depicts the San Pablo Dam Reservoir with a boarder of Ceanothus, is located across from CVS by the mail box near 59 Moraga Way. Stop by and enjoy, and look for six animals in the painting. Photo provided

Inspired by utility boxes in Lafayette and Walnut Creek, Maggie Bosco, a member of the Lamorinda Arts Council and curator of the Orinda Library Gallery, has embarked upon a project, which she shared with the Orinda City Council on Oct. 14, to bring art to Orinda's utility boxes, pipes and so on.

Bosco particularly likes local scenes, like the view of Mt. Diablo painted on a utility box on Mt. Diablo Boulevard in Walnut Creek. Lafayette's utility boxes host whimsical pictures painted by students. At Moraga Commons park in Moraga, a wrapped box was painted by a high school student. The box in Moraga Commons cost \$1,500 and was financed by a private citizen, Bosco said.

Some boxes in Orinda belong to the city, others to other utilities. Director of Parks and Recreation Todd Trimble suggested to Bosco that the project start with boxes owned by the city. Bosco noted that the project will not be seeking funds from the city, but instead will look for grants and donations.

The first step in the project was to have some proof of concept works completed. Bill Carmel painted the first

proof of concept at Mash Gas Station. Carmel took four days to paint the work, which has the theme of Rocky the Squirrel and Andy the Hummer. He used outdoor paint, varnish and an anti-graffiti sealer. Bosco suggested that perhaps Orinda might have a theme of hidden animals.

The second proof of concept, by Kath Balamuth, is a view of San Pablo Reservoir with a border of ceanothus blooms. Placed on back of Big Belly waste receptacle next to a mail box on Moraga Way near the Mash Petroleum building, the work has six hidden animals. Antonio Arroyo installed the art on the back of the big belly.

Artify Orinda is also working with CVS to add art to three wood panels on the side of the shop. Bosco says that the owners of CVS are excited about having some art, and that the parties are negotiating a contract. Three Orinda artists, Lois Meade, Kath Ballamuth and Judy Fine, have already volunteered. All artists have donated their time and effort. Bosco would like to be able to pay the artists, noting that in Berkeley artists were paid between \$200 and \$500 for their work.

Council member Inga Miller asked about legal aspect of art of public buildings, and Planning Director Drummond Buckley told the council that staff is working on a roadmap for future projects, with the intent to come back, possibly on Nov. 10 (after press time), with a policy for the city council to consider.

Donatations to Artify Orinda may be made by mail to Lamorinda Arts Council, Box 121 Orinda 94563. Please put Artify Orinda in the memo on checks. To donate online, go to the Lamorinda Arts Council's website and put Artify Orinda in the comment box. https://lamorindaarts.org/donate/

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