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Watercolor Artist, George Ehrenhaft, Exhibits at the Orinda Library Gallery

By Andrea A. Firth



A street scene in Nepal done in water color by Moraga artist George Ehrenhaft. Photo provided

Moraga resident, George Ehrenhaft, will display 30 watercolor paintings at the Orinda Library Gallery through the month of August. Based on a theme he calls "The Near and the Far," the selection of landscape paintings includes vistas of several local spots including the Lafayette Reservoir, Moraga Ranch, Tilden Regional Park, and Mount Diablo juxtaposed with scenes from his travels to China, Nepal, and Italy.

Ehrenhaft started painting seriously when he retired from teaching high school English in West Chester County after 33 years. Essentially self-taught, he prefers to paint landscapes plein-air-i.e., in the outdoors. When he and his wife started to winter in a rented home in the Oakland hills to escape the snow and cold of New York and be closer to their daughter and grandchildren, he discovered a great environment for plein-air painting and a vibrant and supportive art community. "The competition is fierce," states Ehrenhaft with a smile. About five years ago, brush and easel in tow, he and his wife made a permanent move west and landed in Moraga.

Ehrenhaft quickly became a part of the East Bay art community through his participation in plein-air painting groups, art shows, and the Lamorinda Arts Alliance. "I did not know a soul here," says the artist, but he soon made friends. The walls of Ehrenhaft's home are filled with paintings he has done along side the works of several local artists.

Ehrenhaft's talents do not end with his art. He is a bit of Renaissance man. "I have always been very interested in building," states Ehrenhaft, who has done a number of

large renovation projects on his own homes over the years. "I've poured foundations, hung sheetrock, electrical. I've done it all," he says. He combined his interest in building with his academic background and wrote and illustrated a book entitled, *The Builder's Secret*. "I traveled the country, met a variety of self-builders, asked how they learned and what they did, and wrote their stories" he explains. Ehrenhaft then complimented the text with his own pen and ink drawings.

When he is not running the trails with the Orinda Roadrunners or taking a hike with a local hiking group, Ehrenhaft also finds time to continue to do some academic writing and editing. His art remains a competing interest, and he is fairly prolific. Ehrenhaft typically generates two completed paintings a month. "Water color is not a very forgiving medium," he says, and he claims to discard three of every five paintings he starts. But he seems up to the challenge. "Water color is such an interesting medium. You never know what is going to happen."

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