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Wallace's Ceramics Draw a Crowd

By Andrea A. Firth



Patrons line up outside Orinda Books waiting to get into the sale of Gerry Wallace's ceramic art Photo Ohlen Alexander

They start to arrive around 8:00 a.m. They take a number and head next door to the Village Inn Cafe for breakfast. A little before 10:00 a.m. they begin to queue in numeric order outside the doors of Orinda Books. This is the way it typically goes when Orinda artist Gerry Wallace has a sale of her ceramic works.

"It's kind of amazing," states Wallace, as she reflects on the following that her ceramics attract for the one-day sales that she holds three times a year.

Wallace, a native of southern California, studied art as an undergraduate at the University of California at Berkeley. She then moved east to Orinda where she has been a resident for almost 50 years. After raising three children, she went back to Cal and earned a Masters of Art degree and along the way became friends with Janet Boreta-the longtime owner of Orinda Books.

Wallace began working with clay about 20 years ago, and became one of the artists whose work Boreta displayed in her popular, independent bookstore. These occasional exhibits then transitioned to Wallace displaying her ceramic art in a case in the bookstore year round. About five years ago, Boreta and Wallace came up with the idea for the special one-day sales. "It's done well," states Wallace. "It's been pretty good for both of us."

Wallace creates both functional and sculptural pieces that she covers with colorful, fine line images of people that she draws. Her unique ceramics have gathered many local devotees and some serious collectors. Wallace's next sale at Orinda Books will be held on Friday, December 11th and feature seasonal items such as ornaments, wreaths, and holiday serving dishes. The sale starts at 10:00 a.m.; cookies and tea will be served to late-day shoppers who arrive after 3:30 p.m.

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