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By Andrea A. Firth (Orinda, Lafayette) and Sophie Braccini (Moraga)



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Page 1 photo captions: Top left and bottom right: Plein Air painters capture a garden in bloom. Top middle: Necklaces by Laura Paige, Moraga Art Gallery. Top right: Hand painted coasters by Margaret Lucas-Hill of the Lafayette Gallery. Bottom left: Jewelry designer Dalia Alekna at the Lafayette Gallery Artist Market. Center: Abstract painter Paula Boas at the Lafayette Gallery Artist Market.

### Plein Air Art in Orinda

"You have got to be tough to be a plein air painter," explains artist Teresa Onoda, "We paint no matter what the weather is, unless it's raining," Onoda, who has painted outdoors her entire art career, knows from experience. On a recent outing to paint on Rodeo Beach in the Marin Headlands the winds off the Pacific were so blustery, she had difficulty keeping her canvas on the easel. But the elements are not a deterrent for Onoda who adds, "As an artist living in California it's hard not to paint plein air. Our environment is so gorgeous."

Onoda is not alone in her affinity for art and the outside. She leads a class of 25 local painters who meet weekly year round to paint outdoors scenes through out the Bay Area. "Our calendar and where we paint is dictated by what is going on in nature," states Onoda, "For example, when the pear trees are blooming in Moraga that's where we are."

Orinda's Parks and Recreation Department has offered the plein air painting class for twenty years, and many of the class members have participated in the program for several years. While veterans of the group have developed close ties, the group is welcoming and the artist mix is fluid. Onoda was a student in the class for about five years in the early nineties and recently took on the role of art teacher.

"I go with them on their art journey. My job is to guide them and help them with their painting technique," says Onoda. "I like to problem solve and help artists get to that 'ah hah' moment with their art. It helps me with my own art." The plein air artists exhibit together each year; over 100 hundred of their works will be on display at the Orinda Library Gallery in June. A reception for the exhibit will be held on June 5th from 4 to 6 p.m. and patrons will have the opportunity to mix and mingle with the artists as well as purchase their art.

### Outdoor Art Markets and Summer Daze in Lafayette

The members of the Lafayette Gallery Co-op are a group of artists and friends who share a common bond-their ability to create unique and interesting fine art. "It's a real art community," says Gallery member Paula Boas. The Gallery, which celebrated its tenth anniversary last fall, has 23 members who work in a variety of media. The artists contribute new works for a themed exhibit that rotates every six to eight weeks.

The current Lafayette Gallery exhibit, which runs through June 5th, is called Black and White. Many of the artists created artwork in the implied two-color palette of the exhibit theme, while others employed broader color schemes.

"The artists follow the theme loosely or tightly depending upon what inspires them," explains Boas. While the exhibit has a strong two-tone feel, not all black and white is simply black and white. "Some artists take to the theme more literally than others, but the spirit of the theme resonates," adds Boas. The next exhibit in the Gallery opens on June 8th and runs into early August. The theme for the exhibit is Summer Daze.

The Lafayette Gallery artists will also be busy through out the summer with monthly artists markets. On the third Saturday of the month, the co-op artists set up exhibit booths in the shade of the large live Coastal Oak that anchors the in front of the Gallery. Residents are invited to stroll through Lafayette Circle to watch some of the artists work and peruse the exhibit. The next artist market will be held on June 19th from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and includes live music.

### Moraga Will Enjoy Summer Hues

Soon to celebrate its 10th anniversary, the co-op Moraga Art Gallery will offer a rich summer display. Functioning under the umbrella of the Lamorinda Arts Alliance, the gallery presents new exhibits every 10 weeks featuring one or two focal artists. June 8th is the opening of Summer Hues, an exhibit featuring paintings by Natalia Udaltsova and jewelry creations by Laura Paige. Other gallery members will show watercolor, acrylic and oil paintings, ceramics, photography, mixed media, jewelry and glass designs.

Natalia Udaltsova is an original painter who believes that her art is a way of keeping her sanity. "Life is so intense, you need some shelter for your mind," she says. A statistician and computer programmer during business hours, she uses her canvas to develop painted images that stem from her night visions or her imagination. "My paintings are like children to me," says Udaltsova, "sometimes when I wake up I have an image in my head; I immediately start painting it. After a week I see what I need to change, it is like the painting is asking me to add or remove things, it has its own life; I help it develop and grow, and when it is finished I frame it and it is ready for grown-up life." Her imagery is very rich, diverse, mostly figurative, and she refuses to be categorized as either realistic or surrealistic. "There is no border between surrealistic and realistic," she says, "it depends on how a person sees the world." What is certain is that she puts a lot of herself in her painted work. "I never paint when I am not in a good mood," she says, "I put part of my soul in my work, it is unavoidable. I felt that from when I was a child and my mother taught me watercolor."

Laura Paige, the jewelry maker, has been practicing her art for many years and creates an eclectic array of pieces made of stone, metal, or pearls, mixing textures and colors. A curious person and an explorer, Paige conducts a lot of research, reading about styles, sharing with fellow artists, comparing techniques, and she is continuously engaged in new courses to stretch her creative possibilities. Paige will soon attend a soldering class in order to add more metallic creations to her work, but she will not abandon stones. "Since I was a little girl I loved geology and collected stones," she said, "I love semi-precious stones, their infinite color variation, their warmth." She explains that her clients have helped her expand her appreciation for the mineral kingdom. "When I started," she said, "I was mostly using colors and material that would fit me and that would first attract me, but as my clientele grew, people started asking me for colors that would speak to them, and it expanded my range." She will bring about 40 pieces to the exhibition, but no web previews - "I do not want a website," she says, "jewelry is tactile and needs to be seen and felt on the skin."

### Lamorinda's Summer Art Scene June

6/02 through 6/30-Plein air paintings by local artists will be exhibited at the Orinda Library Gallery. A reception will be held on June 5th, 4-6pm, and many of the artists will be on hand.

Through 6/05-Black and White will be the exhibit at the Lafayette Gallery.

Through 6/20-Andy Warhol's Quick Pix and Pop Icons will be on display at the Hearst Art Gallery in Moraga.

6/08 through 8/07-Summer Daze will be the exhibit at the Lafayette Gallery.

6/08 through 8/12-Summer Hues will run at the Moraga Art Gallery. Opening reception to meet the artists, June 12, 3-5pm

6/19-Lafayette Gallery's Artist's Market, an outdoor marketplace where artists display and demonstrate their art, runs 11am-7pm

6/19-A Walk in the Art from noon to 6pm. Stroll through Orinda's Theater Square, meet local artists, and purchase fine art.

### July

7/1/10-7/31/10-Orinda Library Gallery will exhibit the works of the Lamorinda Arts Alliance. A reception will be held on July 3rd, 3-5pm, and many of the artists will be on hand.

7/17-Lafayette Gallery's Artist's Market, an outdoor marketplace where artists display and demonstrate their art, runs 11am-5pm.

7/25 through Sept-Hearst Gallery will feature 93 landscape paintings by three pioneer

Western women painters. Lecture and reception on 7/25 at 2pm

Gallery Locations and Contact Information

Hearst Gallery Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga.

Phone: (925) 631-4379. Website: [www.hearstartgallery.org](http://www.hearstartgallery.org).

Lafayette Gallery, 50 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette (across the street from Chow);

(924) 284-2788, [www.lafayettegallery.net](http://www.lafayettegallery.net)

Moraga Art Gallery, 570 Center Street, Moraga (in the Rheem Shopping Center);

(925) 376-5407, [www.moragaartgallery.com](http://www.moragaartgallery.com).

Orinda Library Gallery, 26 Orinda Way, Orinda (in the hallway outside the Library and Auditorium).



Flamenco Natalia Udaltsova Photo provided

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

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