

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 04 Issue 17 Wednesday, October 27, 2010

## Life-size Poetry

*Animal sculptures in the garden*

By Sophie Braccini



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*"Rusty Chevalier," in the yard of Tom and Bobbie Preston, is dressed up for Halloween*

*Photos Doug Kohler*

Larch Avenue in Moraga is bordered by a collection of quiet suburban homes with mostly standard architecture and appearance; until you reach number 1307. The nicely remodeled home offers a large front yard in which a metallic horse stands, calm and majestic, in the place of honor. Those who stop and take the time to look will notice other front yard sculptures; New Zealand sheep and their dog enjoy the long creeping grass fescue meadow; a large cement 'guard turtle' stands by the front door. These are only a few of the objects that homeowners Tom and Bobbie Preston have collected around the world to adorn both their front and back yards.

You embark on another adventure when you step in to the Prestons' back yard. Anywhere else it might seem a bit strange to see, scattered in a garden, an old bike, gazing balls, bells, blue bottles, all sorts of frogs and bird houses, sacred objects such as a Buddha, and an

old radiator. The Prestons' unlikely garden, with its hundreds of plants, nooks and crannies is a small world awaiting discovery – and bursting with creativity, charm and humor.

Surrealist poet Yves Bonnefoy defined the poetic experience as a spiritual exercise which, instead of fleeing to the chimera, would offer itself as an introduction to the reality. The Prestons' garden seems to have achieved this poetic balance between materialism and a desire for transcendence.

The Prestons' found the horse in Half Moon Bay. The modern metal structure is a lightly stylized life-size animal. Its rusted color blends very nicely below the large tree that stands in the front yard. "We didn't want to put it in the front yard at first, because we were concerned about the neighbors' reactions," remembers Bobbie Preston, "in fact they love it.

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