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Local Award-Winning Illustrators to Speak at LLLC

By Jennifer Wake



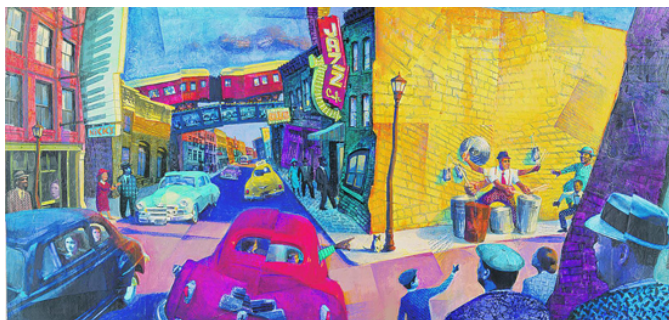
"The King's Taster," by Kenneth Oppel
(HarperCollins) Illustration Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher

anything that's not tied down or buried underground," Fancher says. "Our first projects were commercial illustrations for corporations and editorial magazines. The lines separating who does what were more distinct than they are today. Now, it's often hard to recall which person drew the dog with glasses or who thought painting on upholstery fabric would be fun."

Among the long list of books the two have illustrated include "The Salamander Room" by Anne Mazer, The New York Times best-selling "My Many Colored Days" by Dr. Seuss, and "Amazing Peace" by Maya Angelou. The duo also provided pre-production set and character designs for Pixar's animated films "Toy Story" and "A Bug's Life." Fancher says they really enjoyed being a part of the first days of Pixar, "when they were still a gang of (mostly) guys who hung out in Point Richmond and had the best Halloween costumes ever."

While Fancher says it is difficult to make a lot of money as an illustrator in today's market, she suggests budding artists listen to their heart. "If it is beating for art, go to college. Get a degree so you can teach when the market is down," she says. "Study the masters, live a life beyond art, marry your (grand) vision and your (realistic) abilities to develop a style."

Artists Lou Fancher and Steve Johnson will discuss their work and life as illustrators from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12 as part of "Sweet Thursdays" at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. The free event is designed for all ages. Many of the artists' books will be available for purchase and signing after the event. To view a gallery of their work, visit johnsonandfancher.com.



"The Bebop Express," by H.L. Panahi (HarperCollins/Laura Geringer) Illustration Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher

Being married can be hard work. But try collaborating as illustrators on more than 45 children's books, commercial illustrations, character development projects and advertisements over a 28 year period - all while winning awards and working on other creative endeavors.

That's exactly what Moraga residents Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher have done; they are Society of Illustrators Gold Medal recipients and their 2000 release, "I Walk at Night," by Lois Duncan was recognized as one of The New York Times Best Illustrated Books. The artists will be speaking about their work at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12 during a "Sweet Thursdays" event at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

Fancher, who is also a dancer and writes for several publications including Diablo Magazine, Wired, the Contra Costa Times and Lamorinda Weekly, says collaborating can be challenging when the art isn't going the way you want it to go.

The reward? "Meeting people who say, 'I read this book, showed this art to my child, spouse, significant other, students, stranger on a bus and they loved it.'"

The two artists work together using a variety of mediums including oil, acrylic, wood, paper, pencil, crayons, string - even fabric and candy wrappers. "Pretty much

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