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# Moraga Gallery Exhibit Showcases Unique and Beautiful Porcelain and Quilts

By Kara Navolio



A mixed media quilt by Denise Oyama Miller.

Photos Kara Navolio

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The Moraga Art Gallery is hosting the "Porcelain Poetry/Textile Treasures" show through Aug. 13. The show features two Bay Area artists: ceramicist Donna Arganbright and Denise Oyama Miller's work in textiles.

Arganbright, who has been working with ceramics since 1972, has created beautiful functional pieces in vibrant colored porcelain such as vases, bowls, cups and serving pieces. It's important to her that the pieces can be used and not just displayed which is why her process and materials ensure that the items can be put in the dishwasher and

warmed in the microwave.

"I like to make pieces with attitude and arrange them in conversational groupings," says Arganbright. This is apparent especially in the whimsical vases which resemble a person standing with hands on hips.

After balancing a career in teaching art and her professional art practice, Arganbright now devotes more time to her art practice since retiring from the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. Her work can also be seen at Valley Art Gallery in Walnut Creek.

Oyama Miller's work includes stunning art quilts, silk scarves, and some mixed media pieces. Oyama Miller began quilting in 1976 when the American Bicentennial saw a resurgence in quilting. After years of making patchwork quilts and working with different media, she wanted a new challenge and began making art quilts, combining her knowledge of painting with her quilt-making skills. "I really enjoy textiles a medium," says Oyama Miller, "People are comfortable around textiles; it's more approachable."

Her quilts are made in a style similar to painting techniques of Pointillism or Impressionism as Oyama Miller uses tiny pieces of cut fabric (most are smaller than a quarter-inch) and arranges them as a painter would place strokes of paint, adding layers directly onto

the quilt batting. When she is satisfied with her arrangement, she covers the entire quilt with a fine tulle netting to keep everything in place. She then free stitches it, using line and texture to add depth and enhance the design.

Oyama Miller is inspired by nature and the landscapes she sees while traveling the county in her motorhome with her husband.

Her work can be seen all over the country. A quilt she is particularly proud of is part of an exhibit at George Washington University Textile Museum titled "Stories of Migration: Contemporary Artists Interpret Diaspora." Her piece is in the shape of a kimono and incorporates the story of her family's migration from Japan to Hawaii to California, including time spent in Internment Camps during World War II.

The scarves that she included in the Moraga show are made of repurposed silk sewn together in rectangular blocks of solids and unique prints. The silk comes from kimonos, saris, and other items collected from Asia.

For more information, visit [www.moragaartgallery.com](http://www.moragaartgallery.com), [www.ceramicworksbydonnamarie.com](http://www.ceramicworksbydonnamarie.com) or [www.deniseoyamamiller.com](http://www.deniseoyamamiller.com). The gallery is open noon until 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays, 570 Center Street in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center.

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