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Galleries revived: 'Domesticated' and 'Dark and Light' open

By Sophie Braccini



"Domesticated" exhibition at Jennifer Perlmutter gallery Photo Sophie Braccini

All is not scarcity in the world of art. Two local art galleries are opening their doors to patrons so they can enjoy new exhibits: Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery in Lafayette and Moraga Art Gallery in Rheem. The large well-ventilated spaces surrounded by art where everyone wears a mask offer patrons, if only for a few minutes, the deep serenity and joy that creativity and beauty bestow on onlookers.

Jennifer Perlmutter is showcasing two artists, Dana DeKalb and Jane Fisher, through Aug. 15 who have been friends and co-inspirators since the early '90s. The two have produced several themed exhibitions together. "Domesticated" was Fisher's idea. The painter explains that she rescued an unusual dog in Indonesia that looked like a wild Australian dingo. She was then drawn to doing research on the domestication of dogs through the ages and started a reflection through her art on the human influence on animals.

DeKalb, who Fisher calls her kindred spirit, loved the idea and started painting animals as well. She says that her own art is about concept, control and lack of it, and metaphors. One of her loveliest paintings in the exhibition portrays a man holding a bird house to a flock of birds. She also shows dyptichs representing animals and the contraptions humans have invented for them.

Fisher's technique is remarkable and the dogs' renditions she presents in the exhibit are both descriptive and strikingly modern, self-confident and almost ascetic.

Both women say they have been immersed in their art during this difficult period, with some challenges due to the fact they had to move their studios to their East Bay homes. They think that during confinement the line between what is wild and domesticated was breaking down. We saw foxes in London, coyotes in San Francisco; while humans, caged in their residents, were super domesticated.

In the Rheem Shopping Center the Moraga Art Gallery, "Dark and Light, A Delicate Balance" will run through Sept. 12. Mary Leigh Miller, one of the three artists in the exhibition, explains that the title refers to the play of the colors in the artwork presented, but also to the artists' expression of their inner and outer takes on life.

Miller is a ceramist who has been a part of the art collective for many years and her work has evolved from ceramic objects that can be used in everyday life to more abstract art. This tireless explorer of art forms through ceramics is seeking surprises given by her media. It can mean exploring new forms, playing with texture or with the different colors that the various cooking processes produce. The masks, totems, and wall art she is presenting have been created with use of the raku technique, a low-firing process that creates crackling and interesting colors.

Miller is joined in the exhibition at Rheem by another MAG member, Irene Needoba. The artist displays an attractive and feminine style, using vibrant colors. For this exhibition she wants to attract viewers' attention to the environment, climate change and the effect it has on ocean pollution and on forests fires.

The two painters are welcoming guest artist Claudette McDermott who is featuring jewelry and encaustic paintings. McDermott creates mixed-metal modern jewelry crimping colorful stones, such as earrings, bracelets or necklaces. Her encaustic paintings are lively and highly decorative.

The Moraga Art Gallery is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from noon to 3 p.m. The Jennifer Perlmutter gallery is open Wednesday to Friday from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from noon to 6 p.m. Both locations require their patrons to wear a mask.

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