



FEBRUARY 2016

**CURRENT SHOW
FEATURED ARTIST:
KAREN SPRATT**

**INVITATIONAL
ARTISTS**

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

* *

GALLERY OFFERINGS:

Paintings
Mixed Media
Photography
Sculpture
Woodcraft
Sculptural Lamps

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**THE GALLERY'S WINTER SHOW
CONTINUES THROUGH SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 2016**

**ART WALK RECEPTION
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 5:00 - 8:00 PM**

**THE CURRENT FEATURED SHOW: *BICYCLES & BIRDS*
PAINTINGS BY KAREN SPRATT**

Karen Spratt's featured shows are always well anticipated. Viewers already know that she will have come up with highly original paintings, whatever the theme. This time Karen is coupling two subjects that are often more like incidentals in a scene, but she has turned them into her main focus: bicycles and birds.

Each subject poses its own challenges in being well-rendered in paintings. Karen explains, "With bicycles, the shape of the wheel changes dramatically, depending upon your angle of view and the overall position and perspective." Thus altering the circular wheels into realistic ellipses requires considerable visual acuity, followed by artistic accuracy. The problem with birds is too much detail--all those feathers and shifting shades of color. "You don't need each and every feather to create a bird," Karen explains. "A realistic shape and suggestions of color, sheen, and shadow give you as much bird as the eye needs in order to feel satisfied." Of course, to be well represented crows need less definition than the fine fellow in *What Came First?* (below right)

A true artist in terms of her creative breadth of subject, in her skill in rendering her works, and in her humor and unflinching delight in her chosen themes, Karen, in her own inimitable style, is giving us a thoroughly charming set of paintings, bringing to our attention the qualities of her bird and bicycle subjects from an artist's perceptive point of view. Come and be charmed and delighted yourself!



THE INVITATIONALS PROGRAM

As part of Riverfront's mission to make a place for local artists to present their work to the public, the gallery has two programs: membership and the Invitational program. The Invitational program allows artists to show in the gallery with fewer requirements than for membership. For example, Invitational artists can opt for both smaller display spaces and thus fewer images, as well as having a shorter-term contract. Several hundred artists have taken advantage of this program over the years.

In this issue, we will give readers a brief idea of the depth and variety of methods and styles by Invitational artists currently in the gallery. For example, on this page are three photographers with vastly different subject matter.



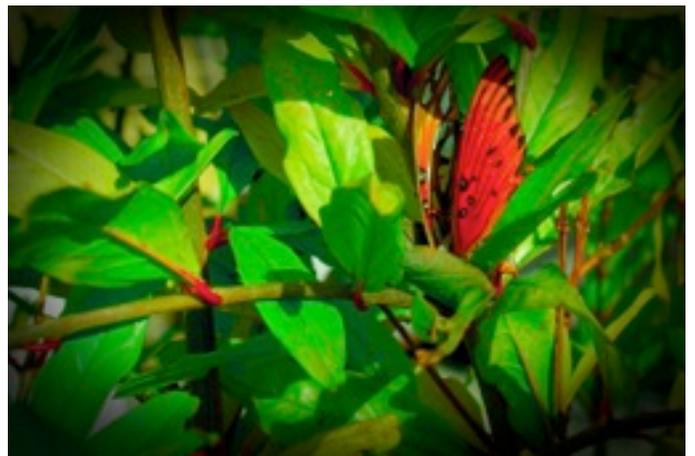
As is clear from the photograph, *The Almighty* (above), **Lisa Franklin** is a superb photographer, who takes advantage of the strength of black and white imagery. Her style is social documentation, which means that her subject matter reflects our culture and society with its foibles, beauties, and vagaries. Her museum-quality work would not look out of place hanging with Arbus, Capa, Cartier-Bresson, or Lartique, so Riverfront is lucky to have her work on gallery walls.

Brian Cluer is a professional earth scientist, pilot, photographer, and devotee of nature. He says, "On really good days I get to combine all of my passions. I am drawn to color and patterns in nature that often can be seen mimicked at scales ranging from river basins to leaf patterns. Such patterning is obvious



in my aerial shot (above). Aerial scenes are often surreal, as many in my Riverfront show are, and yet they are accurate and real representations of the Earth from that perspective."

Documenting the environment from a more personal perspective, photographer **Teresa Heim** says, "Since embarking on my own 'Sustainable Living' path four years ago when I returned to my hometown, Petaluma, photo-journaling my progression has allowed me to capture pivotal components of such a green endeavor. Infusing my photography with color saturation, as with *Always On Watch* (below), is my favorite luminescent technique, emphasizing the dynamic elements while retaining the contextual origins of the shot. Capturing local flourishing landscapes and brilliant organic florals, my collection of thriving ecosystems is truly mesmerizing on both archival and aluminum prints."



While photography is well-represented in the gallery, Riverfront has stunning work by Invitational painters

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as well. One of the foremost is **Kelly Sooter** whose landscapes are often highly modern and somewhat abstract, while her method harks back to old Europe. She explains, "Most of the oil paint I use is made from recipes of the old masters, made with pure pigment, linseed/safflower oil and bees wax."



Describing *Breathe*, a 12 x 12 oil on panel (above) Kelly says, "It depicts one of my favorite fields just a few miles from the Pacific Ocean. Sunsets are hard to do *en plein air*, since I have to race to capture the fast-changing mood of the sky. With this particular sunset, I stood and absorbed the scene, the color, the mood, and then returned to my studio to recreate the feelings that washed over me that evening.

I would best describe this work of art as "contemporary representational." What makes my technique unique is the way I stain or place layers of deep warm color under the painting itself, a process I learned while studying for years under European master artists. Several layers of semi-transparent oil paint are then placed over the stain only to be scraped through with a palette knife (a centuries-old Italian technique called Sgraffito) in strategic places through the painting to reveal the rich golden-red stain below. The sky is a vibrant dance where cool colors vibrate against warm colors."

An identifiable personal style is what makes an artist recognizable at exhibits, in galleries, or on a

website. It is virtually impossible not to recognize **Penny Popken's** paintings. They are always highly stylized, as with the trees and bushes that mark a work as hers, often have a touch of humor, and are done with colors that lend brightness and good cheer to any room. "I exaggerate colors, since I love, love, love color," she says. For maximum visual energy, Penny juxtaposes colors that have a kind of vibrancy when placed together, such as the oranges and purples that give so much life to *Adobe Road Shadows* (below).

As the title suggests, Penny draws upon the beauty of the local landscape for her inspiration. She tells us, "Since 2006, I've been painting Sonoma County scenes--vineyards, mustard fields, lavender gardens, hillsides, etc. I paint loosely, valuing broad brush strokes and texture." Penny paints small versions on site, *en plein air*, to capture the essence of the scene, then does versions as large as 36 x 48 in her studio.



San Francisco painter **Reza Alhosseini** has seen his work accepted into various galleries, including Sandra Lee Gallery in San Francisco. In his series *Lost in Nature*, Reza explores Bay Area landscapes, drawn by warm rich colors and bright highlights. A bit philosophical, he explains, "When I walk through nature I can see all the complexities that I have in my real life. In life I am looking for my hidden identity, but it is hard to find. Nature is endless; there are always new trails and hills representing

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the many steps back and forth and up and down. When I start walking along a natural trail, I feel lost. Once I finish it, I feel like I have found my way, but only for a short time. Life is ever changing, and I am always seeking something new. The same process applies to my painting. There is always a possibility to change, and at some point I let the painting itself dictate the next step.”

As he did with *Lost in Nature #11* (above), Reza uses the time-honored procedure of sketching *en plein air*, creating a thumbnail to visually help with composition, then moving to a small oil study. “In the beginning, I always think of the bigger shapes with loose brush strokes, then add details and values, and finally the highlights at the end. Then I take the color study to my studio and start my final piece. I always think of my concept and how to create the desired atmosphere. There is an inseparable chain between concept and technique, and they should correspond to each other in a harmonious way.”

Pete Maloney came to California as a drummer in pursuit of a music career, but music isn’t his sole talent. He has been a visual artist his entire life. We could put Pete in several categories. He is a photographer with an emphasis on people. He is a sketch artist, often sketching scenes in the airport or other sites where potential subjects are around long enough for him to capture their essence. He has worked in watercolor, oil, pastel, graphite, and linocut. But Pete has also developed his skills in the new medium: digital art. In doing this, he has bridged the gap between the art of the old world and the art of the future.

Pete uses the iPad to compose images much as he would do on canvas, although the tools are different. He explains, “Using a stylus, I draw what comes to mind and most recently have been creating a series of Cityscapes, such as *Brooklyn Night* (below), using a digital brush effect reminiscent of the gouache art used by 1950s illustrators.

“I create colors through a blending from the color wheel on my iPad to give the feel of matte muted colors as well as vibrant colors, depending on the cityscape. The iPad digital medium gives me the freedom to make major revisions in the image that would normally be very difficult to do in traditional mediums. I’m very excited and inspired working in the new frontier of Digital Art.”

His digitally-created works are the focus of Pete’s debut show at Riverfront.



As one of the most versatile artists in Riverfront Art Gallery, **Mary Mahler** is not only a painter working with watercolor, acrylics, pastels, mixed media, and collage, she also does ceramics and linoleum cuts. Mary has taught these visual arts for over 30 years and still gives private classes out of her studio in Petaluma.

In Mary’s recent mixed media piece, *Vintage Stacks* (next page), she has rendered a portion of a collection of books, some mostly intact, some spineless. She has applied bits of text to further the impression that these books have been around a long time and were handled by many, so that covers have been lost or worn enough for the words to show through. With considerable skill in rendering a look of age, Mary has also contrasted cool and

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Left: *Vintage Stacks*, mixed media by Mary Mahler
Above: wood desk, chair, and accessories by Dan Melville

warm colors, giving the piece a delicate richness and nostalgic appeal.

Speaking of versatility, we congratulate **Dan Melville** on the new direction his artistry has taken. Many households in Petaluma (and elsewhere) have Dan's unusual metal lamps as a focal point. Those lamps are unique sculptures that simply fly out the door. Even other gallery artists have bought his lamps. Warning: if you see a lamp you like, don't wait. It probably won't be there next week.

Dan now has, for the first time, a large work in wood: a desk which includes a number of special touches, some being small antiques. The desk includes two lamps. On one are decorative clamps to hold notes and reminders. There is a pencil cup, pencil sharpener, stapler, antique inkwell, mesh holders for various small items, and a chair.

All of Dan's prior work in the gallery has been in metal. Yet since Dan owns a flooring business, wood seems like a natural medium. He has a continually-evolving imagination, so we are waiting to see what unique works he will devise next.

Even with this limited coverage of a few of the 15 to 20 Invitational artists in the gallery, it is clear that they offer fine work in numerous media and styles.

RIVERFRONT AT RESTAURANTS

For several years, artists affiliated with Riverfront Art Gallery have supplied artwork for the walls at Cucina Paradiso, 114 Petaluma Blvd. N. in Petaluma. Some of the work is now in the restaurant's collection, but much of the art is displayed for a few months before new work by other artists is rotated in.

Cucina Paradiso owners now have a location in Santa Rosa called Basilico Cucina Italiana at 4776 Sonoma Highway. Riverfront is pleased to announce that here too diners will find the walls decorated with paintings, photography, and mixed media by gallery-affiliated artists.

Happy Valentine's Day !

*Share Your Love Of Art
With Someone You Love !*