



Sonoma County artists share their local flavor

By [Stuart Courtney](#)

Staff Writer

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An artist’s brush mark — their one-of-a-kind calligraphic brush stroke — may be as singular as their fingerprints or signature. Monet, Van Gogh, Cezanne and many other famous artists had celebrated brush marks that have become legendary among art historians and aficionados.

Brush marks are a function of many factors including brush preference as well as finger, hand and wrist movements, applied pressure and possibly heredity.

At the opening reception of “Art Exhibit 2014,” a show produced by the Art Committee of the Rohnert Park-Cotati Regional Library, third-generation artist Paula Matzinger said, “Some people say my work looks a lot like my mom’s, so perhaps it’s because of similarities in our brush marks.”

The brush marks and collections of Matzinger and eight other Sonoma County artists will be on display in the Armando Flores Meeting Room of the Rohnert Park-Cotati Regional Library through March 15 (see full schedule below). Now in its eighth year, the show is under-written by the Friends of the Rohnert Park-



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Several members of the community came out to view the artistic talents of their local artists at the Rohnert Park Public Library’s opening reception last Tuesday.



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“High Street Contemporary” by Paula Matzinger.

Cotati Regional Library. Admission is free (The art committee also produces a photography show in August).

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for those of us in the area to learn about Sonoma County artists,” said Bill Taft of Cotati.



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“Island Boy” by Donald R. Pate.

Matzinger garnered inspiration from her mother and grandfather. “I grew up looking at their works on our walls,” she said. “I’m not certain it’s hereditary because I believe anybody can be an artist. It’s just a passion that you go to school for.” Matzinger was a licensed architect with a degree from University of California, Davis before studying painting at Santa Rosa Junior College.

A self-described expressionist painter because her colorful landscapes are expressions of how she sees them, Matzinger’s acrylic and oil paintings stand in almost direct contrast to the work of two other exhibiting artists who studied under world renowned artist Charles Becker and his “super-realism” approach to painting.

Susan Ball’s “Still-Life with Blue Bottle” offers impeccable detail including minor cracks in a glaze-fired clay vase and a serpentine patch of black mold on a red onion. Ball resides in Sebastopol.

Paintings by Rachel Montague such as “Lavender Garden” and “Sweet Celebration” display an approach to detail pushing the envelope toward a surrealistic style with exaggerated shadowing and over-saturated colors.

The opening reception drew a crowd of about 50 while the show attracts many visitors during library hours.

“This is the third or fourth year my wife and I have visited the art show in conjunction with picking up books,” said Kit Grimm who lives in rural Bennett Valley. “It’s a nice mix of media, subject matter and very oriented toward California. Last year we actually bought one of the paintings.”

Windsor artist Pam Lewis specializes in “western wildlife art” and leans in the direction of detail and realism. While admiring a painting of hers called “Eye of the Forest V,” Ric Sussaman of Rohnert Park said, “It looks like the blackbird is moving.”

The artistic style of Lenore Carrion resides partway between realism and expressionism. Her

collection of “transparent watercolor” captures a wonderful sense of harmony among her subjects and an exquisite blending of colors. Carrion has an undergraduate degree in art history from San Jose State University, and prefers painting on location: ocean beaches, boat harbors, redwood forests and farm buildings.

Artist Judson Snyder has been a renowned journalist working in the Rohnert Park-Cotati area since the early 1970s, and is currently the opinion-editorial writer for The Community Voice. His detailed pen and ink drawings are collectively titled “Vanishing Rural Architecture,” capturing many of the dilapidated Sonoma County outbuildings such as barns and chicken coups. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, and earned a degree in English and political science at New York University.

Most of Donald Pate’s creations are in oil. He is a travel photographer and bonsai practitioner in addition to being an artist specializing in character studies of realistic art. His treatment of eyes is especially poignant with some of his subjects bearing intense “eye contact” that demands attention. “I love traveling to Africa, South America and Asia, and take my inspirations from there,” said Pate.

Susan St. Thomas is fully immersed in the art world. She teaches watercolor painting, mixed media painting and collage at her studio in Occidental and via the Older Adult Seniors Program of Santa Rosa Junior College. “My specialty is using art to help people discover themselves and express a different side,” she said. St. Thomas is also an astrologist with clients all over the world.

She chose to exhibit a collection of “animals in water color” at this show because it’s one of the courses she has taught on and off for years. The one-time teacher in the transformative art program at John F. Kennedy University in Berkeley also specializes in mandalas because they are a traditional form of healing and meditation. “I like painting in the morning,” she said, “right out of the dream state because I can wander into my studio and stay there as long as possible.”



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A protégé of St. Thomas, Jim Cronin paints exclusively in oil with many of his settings depicting rural Sonoma County. He started painting in the 1980s, but took a 22-year hiatus to live the “RV lifestyle.” “Susan has given me the inspiration to resume,” he said. He retired from Chevron Research in Richmond in the early 1990s.

Cronin prefers oil because acrylic paint dries too quickly. “Oil is more forgiving,” he said, “I have a day or so to go back and correct my work before it dries.”

When asked by the STAR if he had any words of wisdom for SSU art majors, Cronin said: “Painting brings a lot of joy and freedom to put down expressions and ideas. Follow your heart.”

Art Exhibit 2014: March 4 – 15

Rohnert Park-Cotati Regional Library

6250 Lynne Conde Way (at State Farm Dr.)

Tuesday – Friday, noon – 6 p.m.



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“High Street Contemporary” by Paula Matzinger.

Saturday, March 8, noon – 3:45 p.m.

Saturday, March 15, noon – 3 p.m.

(The library is closed Sunday and Monday.)



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