

**A portrait of our times:  
Mendocino County Art Association's 60<sup>th</sup> year invites reflection, celebration**



**"Maija, Latvian Girl" by Nancy Teeling Baltins**

by Roberta Werdinger

The Grace Hudson Museum will host a special weekend of events on March 28 and 29 to celebrate the opening of their new exhibit, "Artists Look Back—Mendocino County Art Association Turns 60," a juried retrospective of over 80 works of MCAA members, along with historical displays and recorded interviews. An opening preview, with refreshments and free to all, will take place on Friday, March 28, from 5 to 8 pm. The following afternoon, from 2 to 4 pm, a panel of MCAA members will host "Looking Back at 60," in which they will relate stories from the organization's rich history. This event is free with Museum admission.

"The members of the MCAA started their organization in 1954, a good 20 years before the Grace Hudson Museum was built (1986)," states Museum curator Marvin Schenck, who, along with Mendocino County Arts Council Director Alyssum Wier and College of the Redwoods Professor Emeritus Robert Rhoades, juried this show. "MCAA had already developed a vital arts appreciative audience when support for the museum was needed." Indeed, the history and activities of the MCAA and the Grace Hudson are

richly interwoven, with MCAA members serving as museum volunteers while using the Museum's activity room for their weekly Open Studios and other community events.

Most important, the MCAA has kept the making and viewing of art alive for our county, while sustaining it as a vital force in the lives of its members. "So many of our members have been involved and productive for a very long time," comments Svetlana Artemoff, coordinator for the exhibit. "Most of them have day jobs or are retired. Many took up art after they finished their first career. We have members who are active in their 90s."

To recognize and celebrate the talents and efforts of this unique group, every person in the MCAA's 75-plus membership base was invited to submit his or her artwork. The jury then chose the best piece of each member who entered. "The MCAA wanted to represent the spectrum of its membership," Schenck explains, noting the high quality and variety of the artwork. The majority of the works are watercolors and oils, with plein air paintings and portraits being the most popular. "Many of the artists are continuing the watercolor traditions of California watercolor painting," Schenck notes. The show also includes several sculptures, a stained-glass window, textiles, collages and a mask.

From the start, the MCAA has been carefully documenting its history, keeping scrapbooks and other documents that trace its lively and ongoing array of activities, from selling art supplies to fellow members to holding art fairs, fundraisers and demonstrations. From this legacy, a DVD has been produced with archival photos, interviews with some of the earliest members, and a complete catalog of the show. The DVD will be shown at the exhibit and will also be on sale at the Museum gift shop.

While "Artists Look Back" is primarily a retrospective, its members are far too dynamic and creative to just rest on their well-earned laurels. The organization maintains a wide array of activities into the present day, hosting weekly open studios and monthly critique sessions, along with six mini-workshops and two full workshops a year, taught by notable artists and funded by membership fees. Members show their work at local coffee shops, banks and other public venues. Most of all, they provide a noncompetitive and supportive atmosphere where art can be celebrated in the present while it is extended into the future, into the hands of the next generation of long-lived artists to come.

"Artists Look Back" will be on display until May 25, 2014. In addition to the opening weekend, several events are planned in conjunction with the exhibit, including a public tour with Curator Marvin Schenck and MCAA Vice President Patricia Chadwick on April 8, another tour with Patricia Chadwick on May 3, and a Family Fun at the Museum charcoal drawing workshop on May 17 titled "The Next Generation" and taught by Marie Pera.

Funding of this exhibition was made possible by Savings Bank of Mendocino County, Barra of Mendocino, the Sun House Guild and the Mendocino County Art Association. The Grace Hudson Museum is at 431 S. Main St. in Ukiah and is a part of the City of Ukiah's Community Services Department. General admission to the Museum is \$4, \$10

per family, \$3 for students and seniors, and free to members or on the first Friday of the month. For more information please go to [www.gracehudsonmuseum.org](http://www.gracehudsonmuseum.org) or call 467-2836.

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