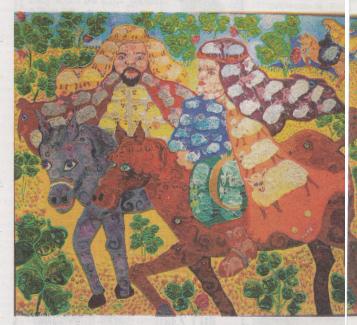
Funky figures inhabit 'World of Woof'



By Victoria Dalkey Bee Art Correspondent

lose to the entrance to Maija Peeples-Bright's retrospective exhibit at the Blue Line Gallery in Roseville sits a small crate. It held all of the worldly goods of Maija Gergeris' family when they escaped from Latvia, which was soon to be overtaken by the Russians at the end of World War II.

"My parents were teachers and we had heard that the Russians were going to round up intellectuals, so we escaped to a refugee camp in Germany," she ළ recalled.

In 1950, her family found

the family came to the United States. Born in 1942, Peeples-Bright was 8 years old when she came to America. Here she found herself working on a farm, picking olives and peaches.

"I soon found it was harder to get a lug of olives than peaches," she said with a laugh. Eventually the family

found a home at 2012 D St. in Sacramento, and their daughter excelled in school. She won a math scholarship to Sacramento City College, then transferred in 1963 to the University of California, Davis, where her life changed forever.

Taking a required art class from William T. Wiley, 28 a sponsor in Orangevale and she fell in love with making

art and changed her ma)r. The rest is history.

She studied with Wile, Robert Arneson, Wavne Thiebaud and other menbers of the prestigious at faculty at the Davis univrsity and soon developed ier own style of painting, wich came to be associated wih the Funk movement tha arose in Davis in the 190s. Wiley had a powerful in uence on her

"He liked me and world share books with me," se recalled. "I kept being lee for calculus class, but as class was wonderful."

The show at Blue Lin includes Peeples-Bright earliest work, a 1965 sel portrait that is reminisont of Matisse's "Woman in

Maija Peeples-Bright's "Sheep Sheiks" illustrates the

playful use of color and animal shapes that characterize much of her work.

Blue Line Gallery

Hat." Nearby is a large canvas on which she memorialized the Davis art faculty, with Wiley at the center, looking at a yellow cow. It is wildly expressionistic and a precursor of what was

In 1966, she painted "Beast Hay Stacks," a tribute to Monet in which she combined animal imagery with a patterned landscape. In 1969 she was well on the way to her mature style with "Goose Lady Godiya." a riotous canvas in which Lady Godiva's naked limbs and long hair are made up of geese.

Peeples-Bright was one of the first artists to show at the legendary Candy Store Gallery in Folsom, which was home to Wiley, Arneson, Roy De Forest, David Gilhooly and other prominent Funk artists (or "nut artists" as they preferred to be called).

When she divorced her first husband, David Zack, Peeples-Bright sought refuge

MAIJA PEEPLES-BRIGHT: MAIJA'S WORLD OF WOOF

Where: Blue Line Gallery, 405 Vernon St. No. 100, Roseville When: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays or by appointment, through July 14 Cost: Free Information: (916) 783-4117.

with Adeliza McHugh, the doyenne of the Candy Store. McHugh let her sleep in the gallery while she was looking for a home and would bring bread and coffee to her in the mornings.

"She was like a mother to me," Peeples-Bright said. "I was closer to her than to my own mother.'

Soon she found a home in Folsom and secured a teaching job at Sierra College. She met her next husband, Earl Peeples, and they had a long, happy life together that ended in 1999 when Peeples died of cancer. Subsequently she married Bill Bright, who had been a close friend of Peeples. They now live in a home they built themselves in Rocklin, where Maija has a large studio and Bright has a woodworking shop.

Installed by Tony Natsoulas, the show at Blue Line is jammed with vintage and new works by Peeples-Bright, who is a true Sacramento treasure. There are too many works on view. over a hundred, to mention

many in a short space, but some that stand out include a lively scene from 1989 that includes jaguars, jockeys and jasmine and a large diptych that features lions, daffodils and toucans. Also compelling is "Sheep Sheiks," in which the sheiks' bodies are made up of fluffy

One of the recurring characters in Peeples-Bright's work is Woof, her beloved dog, who is memorialized in the vibrant "Woofus Vitruvius Water Way" done in 2001. Nearby is her tribute to Leonardo da Vinci, "Woofanardo." There is so much joy in these images that you can't help loving them.

The show is accompanied by a video monitor playing "The Spirit of Woofdom," a film by Laurence Campling that tells the story of Peeples-Bright's life and art.

In it, she says, "There is so much to discover and play with. ... It does not interest me to be a chronicler of evil things.

"There are no mistakes in art, just new and different surprises," she concludes.

The generosity of spirit in Peeples-Bright's heavily patterned, thickly textured, joyously colored works is infectious.



Peeples-Bright's "Goose Lady Godiva" from 1969.

Victoria Dalkey, "Funky figures inhabit 'World of Woof." The Sacramento Bee (July 6, 2012).