

# Jorma solo show Saturday to highlight art of h

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For anyone up for some good art, music and coffee this weekend, the Donkey Coffee offers an extraordinary demonstration of compassion and respect, not to mention talent.

At 8 p.m. on Saturday, Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame guitarist Jorma Kaukonen will play an exclusive show at the coffee house in conjunction with an exhibit of paintings by his former wife, the late Margaretta Kaukonen.

Jorma's current wife, Vanessa Kaukonen, organized the display, which is taken from the collection that Margaretta left to her friend Vanessa years before she died. According to Vanessa, she wanted to show them while Margaretta was still alive, but the artist "was not receptive to the idea."

Margaretta Peterson Kaukonen, a.k.a. Melles Meje, or May, died in 1997 of liver disease, a result of her alcoholism. According to an entry on Jorma's Web site, her death "didn't come as a surprise, but it was sad nonetheless." Margaretta died alone in a hotel in San Francisco's infamous Mission District. At the time, she and Jorma were divorced.

Margaretta and Jorma lived in the San Francisco Bay area during the turbulent 1960s, a time that Vanessa says gave birth to fame for both of them. Jorma's name became well known through the popular Bay Area rock bands Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna,



Artwork by Margaretta Kaukonen



Andrew Cantino, left, Matt Smith and Dave Lenzi share a laugh at Donkey Coffee Tuesday afternoon. Hanging on the wall in the background are paintings by the late Margaretta Kaukonen. Photo by Ed Venrick.

and Margaretta designed several album covers in addition to her original artwork. Her work has been collected by Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir of the Grateful Dead, and Grace Slick of the Jefferson Airplane, among others.

Margaretta's paintings at the Donkey are displayed in the square frames that Jorma made for her in his woodshop. Margaretta then painted the frames as an extension of each piece.

Most of the pieces in the show are acrylic on glass and wood, and the nature of the medium is right for the artwork. The resulting texture makes each painting look deeper than one dimension, and it's apparent that every piece was meant to convey more than one layer of meaning. Margaretta's imaginative titles add yet another layer to the works.

"Nessie Goes to Tokyo on a Discount Ticket" is a good example of the typical style of the artist: simple, sweeping bright colors that seem completely abstract until a second look with a different perspective reveals another aspect of the work.

Three autobiographical pieces are especially touching because they give us a glimpse into Margaretta's self image. "Noth-

ing Is in My Reach" captures a powerful feeling of desperation with simple images of arms, fingers and a box. "Self-portrait at 3 a.m. Tweaked" and "Self-portrait in Black" further illustrate the darkness the artist saw in herself.

"Big City Paranoia" perfectly captures the dark roller-coaster feeling of living an unstable life. Abstract train tracks against dark, stormy skies seem to be so high that a fall is inevitable.

The lavender frame with hot-pink interior surrounding "Red Rain" definitely makes the piece. The simple beauty created by the contrast of the frame and the painting itself is unforgettable. Simple light brown shapes are accented by gold and dark brown and are set against a wintry-looking background. This is a painting a person might buy simply because it is aesthetically lovely.

Jorma's show on Saturday is worth attending in its own right, let alone as an added bonus to this tribute to a legacy of her time.

The exhibit continues through the middle of January at the Donkey, and then will tour

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# is late ex-wife



**Margareta Kaukonen, circa 1960s**

galleries throughout the U.S. until all the pieces are sold. A portion of the proceeds will go to alcohol treatment in teens, beginning with the Bassett House in Athens.

Tickets to the show probably will go fast.