

Style

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[gallery hopping]

Beauty boldly portrayed

By BROOKSIE BERGEN

Color and form applied by a heavy hand or with a light touch, is an expression of life as portrayed by artists. Like voyeurs, we read their souls through their talented hands. And each artist has his or her own unique way of sharing their visions.

Although works of art were standardized in earlier times, many artists chafed at the restrictions imposed. One of those rebels was Dutch artist Franz Hals, who tired of portraying wealthy dignitaries with their white, pleated ruffs and somber black costumes and sought subject matter in local settings to relieve his boredom. He used any surface available to paint his picturesque

characters, often finding beauty in squalor. His bold brushwork and vivid color received acclaim.

Area galleries are filled with the explosive works of men and women who face life as boldly as Hals, and see all aspects of it as fodder for their palettes, kilns or potters wheels. Focusing on color, form and composition, they invite the viewer to see what they see, feel what they feel, and what emerges is beauty boldly portrayed.

Local artist Kristin Gustafson says her early works were inspired by Gauguin, whose bold colors and ornamental expressionistic style marked him as a true artist of the Symbolist period. Gustafson, who is showing at the Fiori Gallery, says she broke away from her batik-style renderings on silk in Minnesota to "thaw out, and learn to chill out" in Florida with its flora, fauna and beaches. Focusing on watercolor and acrylic, her brilliant, decorative tropical works are enhanced by metallic glazing that adds texture and depth. If you peer closely into her paintings, you can see tiny creatures almost hidden by the foliage. Her canvases are also featured in the Towles Court Art Colony and Longboat Key Art Center.

(Note: Some galleries are closed on Mondays; call ahead.)



COURTESY PHOTO

"Garden of Innocence" by Kristin Gustafson, part of a series called "We Are All Connected," metallic acrylic on canvas, 22" by 44" at Fiori Gallery.