

Smith Galleries on Hilton Head Island, SC, Celebrates 24 Years on the Island with Jewelry Exhibits

Jean and Wally Smith moved to Hilton Head Island, SC, in December of 1987 from a small town in east Tennessee with a population of less than 1,000. Hilton Head Island had a population of 13,000 at that time. "We thought we had moved to the big city", says Wally. Much has changed since then with Hilton Head now hosting almost 40,000 permanent residents.

Jean and Wally hit the ground running after moving to Hilton Head in 1987. They selected space in the Village at Wexford shopping center, hired an architect and a contractor to design and build the gallery. While the construction was going on, Wally was busy building all the custom display fixtures for the gallery. "Those were busy days," says Jean, "but we worked hard and opened the gallery on May 14, 1988."

Much has changed in the gallery business since that opening day for Smith Galleries. Wally says, "we still do everything we did 24 years ago but now we have the technology of the internet which began for us with a web site in 1998. But that was only the beginning. Now, we have two blogs, e-letters, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter and perhaps a couple more things I can't remember at the moment. The world expects businesses to communicate in all these new ways in addition to the old methods of print advertising. When we opened our first business in 1972, our only piece of technology was a rotary dial wall mount telephone and the most interesting thing was that it was a party line. It took more than a year to get a private line. Can you imagine that today? Even this article is being prepared as a virtual presentation."

The gallery will be celebrating their 24th anniversary during May with two special jewelry exhibitions by Judith Neugebauer and Bree Richey.

Bree Richey's jewelry collection pulls directly from her love for Art Deco and modern architectural design. She often finds inspiration for her work in the clean lines of modern furniture, the fluid pattern of fabric, and the vibrant color of fine gems and pearls. All of these elements are apparent in her work, where metal forms and an array of colored gems are brought together seamlessly to create elegant and highly wearable jewelry.

Richey was recently named the winner of the inaugural Future of Design contest, a business incubator competition for jewelry designers created by Cindy Edelstein of the Jeweler's Resource Bureau and Andrea Hill of StrategyWerx.



Work by Bree Richey

Richey comes from a family of jewelry designers but found her own passion for the craft when she attended the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts. Continuing her education at the Revere Academy of Jewelry Arts in San Francisco, Richey went on to apprentice with jewelers and focused on creating pieces that were af-



Works by Judith Neugebauer

fordable to the average jewelry consumer.

The contest was judged live at MJSA Expo New York by Cindy Edelstein; Andrea Hill; Kate Peterson, owner of Performance Concepts; Jim DeMattei, founder of ViewPoint; and Mendel Rotenberg, a longtime jewelry manufacturer.

Richey's "laser-like" vision for the future of her eight-year-old design studio gave her the edge in the competition, judges said.

As the winner, Richey will receive more than \$250,000 in business services and support.

Richey's exhibit will be on view through May 31, 2012.

Judith Neugebauer's jewelry is a favorite at Smith Galleries. The gallery will feature this special exhibition titled *Leaves of Gold* through June 30, 2012.

Neugebauer writes, "A previous career in classical ballet and theater instilled within me a deep awareness and appreciation for movement, line and balance. These are the classical qualities I have always tried to incorporate into my jewelry designs...and in my life."

"My work is individually fabricated using sterling silver with an overlay of 23K gold leaf. Many pieces also incorporate freshwater pearls and Australian boulder opals set in 22kt gold. Die-formed hollow elements create visual depth, yet the overall concern with lightness and movement remain central to my approach. A recent development has been the use of oxidized, sandblasted sterling silver with 23kt gold leaf to create an even more dramatic surface."

These two outstanding jewelers are only two of many featured in the gallery on a continuing basis. The gallery also shows fine craft in many media, as well as two dimensional art. And Wally offers custom picture framing with a special focus on conservation practices.

In addition to these jewelry exhibits, the gallery will have other activities during the days immediately around May 14. See the gallery website or join their e-club for details.

New to the gallery is a section for creative toys for children called "Kids Who...KIC". The KIC stands for Know, Imagine and Create. Grandparents are appreciation this new resource for toys for their smart grandchildren.

For further information check our SC Commercial Gallery listings, call the gallery at 843/842-2280 or visit (www.smithgalleries.com).



A Few Words From Down Under

Editor's Note: Judith McGrath contributed her writings about exhibits and events taking place in Western Australia to Carolina Arts for about a decade. Although she was writing about events taking place thousands and thousands of miles away, they seemed relevant to what was going on here in the Carolinas. Her contributions were very popular when we first ran them and continue to be popular on our website's archives. We've decided to revisit them from time to time.

A Few Words from Down Under Exposing Naked Emperors

by Judith McGrath, first run in our Aug. 2002 issue

In my capacity as an art critic, I approached an exhibition of celebrated contemporary artists from around this state with the expectation of enjoying some thought provoking examples of cutting edge art. CRASH! Big let down. The exhibition was full of mindless stuff flung around the floor, dangling from the walls, teetering on plinths. It was visually painful and I wanted to weep. But there was a job to do, so I fought past the disappointed "me" to reach the objective, analytical "we" to properly critique the exhibition.

One exhibit consisted of a photo-documentation of a week in the life of the artist. Not one image ignited interest as there was nothing creative about them; no play with light and shadow, no thought to cropping or framing the shot, no manipulation of scale or depth perception, no experimenting with the developing process. Actually there was nothing about these pictures that differentiated them from the normal collection of happy snaps, processed at the local mall and found in every family album. The pictures showed people and places that were somehow meaningful to the exhibitor but we weren't privy to their significance.

There was an installation that involved a standard ironing board, opened in the work position with the iron standing upright on the floor beneath it. It was titled "Untitled". We suppose the artist was making a statement about the domestic environment so we looked for something, anything that could be interpreted as credible. All we saw was a collection of opposites - large/small, wood/metal, vertical/horizontal - and all we could reference was some salient segment on Sesame Street we remembered from our formative years.

Then there was a series of landscape paintings by one artist. The initial response was 'bad' but we must not judge before making a thorough investigation; look beyond the surface, discover what is being communicated, define its relevance, seek originality, evaluate skills. We read the "artist's statement" posted on the wall. It was a well-written document, double-spaced and typed in large font for easy reading. It commented on the ephemeral aspects of nature and how all great landscape paintings of the past were myth making. The exhibitor had a valid opinion, one that could be argued if relevant examples were used to back it up. Instead we were faced with four clumsy images painted on flattened cardboard cartons. The paint used was house paint, cans of incorrectly mixed colours deemed unsaleable by the paint store and gladly given away. The images were poorly composed, badly drawn and the paint slapped on with a lack of finesse.

A charitable person might say these pictures are examples of naïve style, except in art terms naïve means "untutored" and "honest". This guy has a Masters in Fine Art and attends art workshops. Is that

untutored? In defence of his ghastly work the artist wrote how all paintings are lies and if art really wanted to imitate nature it too should be ephemeral. His argument would have been more plausible if he weren't trying to sell the already decaying exhibits for such exorbitant prices. Is that honest? Critical Judgement: Good statement, too bad about the art.

We were surrounded by pretentious examples of self-absorption, bad kitsch and poorly presented exhibits that were totally mute and needed written explanations to hold them together. There wasn't a work of art in the place so "we" became "me" and instead of viewing the exhibits I began my usual practice of watching the lookers to observe their reactions to the display. It soon became evident I was experiencing a clear-cut case of the Emperor's New Clothes' syndrome. Although different people reacted differently to the artless stuff, all seemed to accept what they viewed as "good art". It had to be; after all it was done by artists and exhibited in a public gallery.

I enjoyed following two mature ladies around the show. They stopped every so often in front of an exhibit, declared it "very contemporary" and spoke knowingly in church whispers about various art movements in relation to their times. They were more involved with their discussion than the exhibits as their conversation was in no way related to the work on display. It was as if they considered a gallery the proper place to talk about art, no matter what's on show. I gathered they weren't sure if they liked the work or not. They would wait and see if it stood the test of time then with hindsight, they'd know if it was good or not. I must admit, their judgement had merit.

One retired couple lingered at each exhibit. They looked from object to catalogue to object again with shaking heads bent close in a conspiratorial manner. When engaged in conversation, they admitted to being impressed by the information in the catalogue, which assured them the artists must be important but confessed in apologetic voices to not liking the work. They found no rhyme or reason for the exhibition and nothing significant in any of the exhibits. Although they reiterated how they didn't know about art, I believe, of all the visitors to the gallery, this couple saw the exhibition in its true light.

The work on show lacked the mantle of creativity and as such disrobed the artists of any respect earned in their early years. The emperors of the new art world are all naked. So "I" turned around and "we" decided to head off to another gallery to review a different exhibition. Why bother writing about this stuff, no matter what is said about the work it cannot be validated much less made to seem important as no one will even remember it next week. Besides there is nothing to be gained by exposing Naked Emperors, it only embarrasses those who see the barrages!

Judith McGrath lives in Kalamunda, Western Australia, 25 minutes east of Perth. She received a BA in Fine Art and History from the University of Western Australia. McGrath lectured in Art History and Visual Literacy at various colleges around the Perth area, and was an art reviewer for *The Sunday Times* and *The Western Review* both published in the Perth area. McGrath was also a freelance writer and reviewer for various art magazines in Australia. She also co-ordinated the web site *Art Seen in Western Australia* found at (<http://www.artseeninwa.com>). McGrath is currently enjoying retirement.

The deadline each month to submit articles, photos and ads is the 24th of the month prior to the next issue. This will be May 24th for the June 2012 issue and June 24 for the July 2012 issue. After that, it's too late unless your exhibit runs into the next month. Don't be late - send your info well before the deadline.