

DISTINCTIVE GALLERY DISTRICTS DRAW
ART LOVERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Destination ART



By Patra Taylor



At the turn of the 20th century, Charleston languished as an old Southern town forgotten by time. But in 1920, an amazing collaboration of artists and writers spearheaded a dramatic cultural revival that would help Charleston reclaim its role as one of America's most significant art and culture centers.

Drawing on an endless supply of subject matter, the artists of the period between 1915 and 1940, dubbed "The Charleston Renaissance," began documenting the lush landscapes, plantation life, architectural landmarks and local color through their oils, watercolors, drawings and prints. Four local pillars of this era — artists Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, Anna Heyward Taylor and Alfred Hutty — are credited with inspiring Charleston's preservation movement by reawakening the public to the charm and significance of the city's architectural heritage through their images. Recognizing the city's historic district as the perfect backdrop for showcasing the treasures of the area's rich past, artists began opening studios and galleries, primarily in Charleston's French Quarter.

According to Julie Dunn, art lovers recognized the French Quarter as one of America's foremost art destinations. "It's a lovely neighborhood in downtown Charleston bordered to east and west by Charleston Harbor and Meeting Street; and to the north and south by Market and Tradd streets," explains Dunn, president of the French Quarter Gallery Association (FQGA). "Visitors from all over the country and around the world come here to see the architecture and are surprised by how many amazing art galleries there are in the French Quarter."

Dunn says the French Quarter features more than 30 art galleries, all within walking distance of one another. The works of well over 500 artists representing a diverse variety of styles and mediums — from traditional to contemporary —

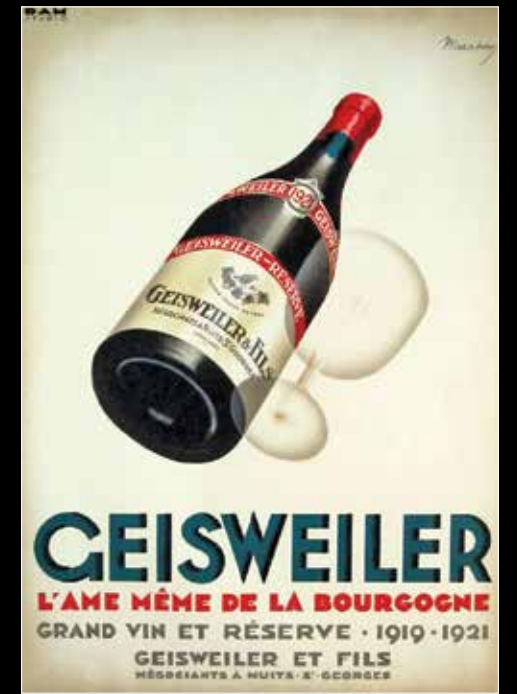
Atrium Art Gallery (2)



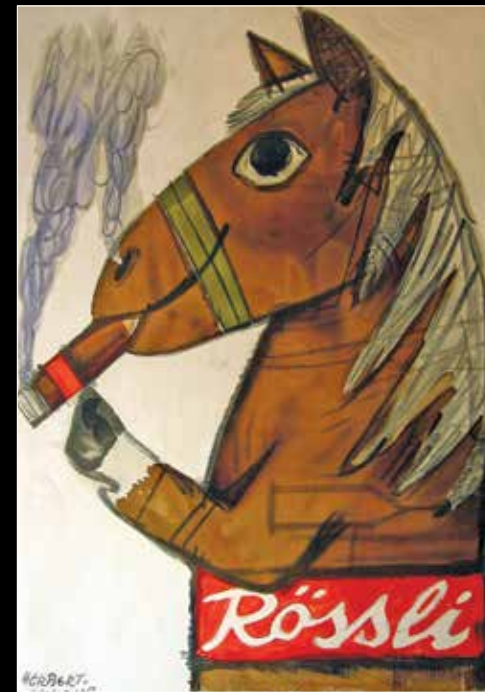
Title: Halle Saale Schleife
Artist: Unknown
Year: 1951
Size: 33 x 26 1/2 inches



Title: Monaco
Artist: Grun
Year: 1910
Size: 48 1/2 x 34 3/4 inches



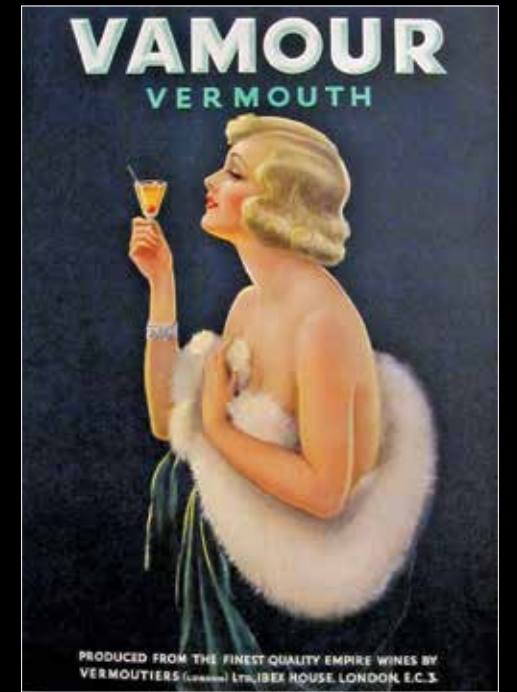
Title: Geisweiler Wine
Artist: Marton
Year: ca. 1930
Size: 62 x 46 inches



Title: Rosсли Cigar Horse
Artist: Leupin
Year: 1954
Size: 50 x 35 1/2 inches



Title: Dartmouth Winter Carnival
Artist: Dohanos
Year: 1952
Size: 34 x 22 inches



Title: Vamour Vermouth
Artist: Unknown
Year: 1922
Size: 30 x 20 inches

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can be found in what has become the center of the visual arts community in Charleston.

Dunn, a black-and-white fine art photographer, serves as gallery director for Atrium Art Gallery, located at 61 Queen Street in the heart of the French Quarter. The gallery, owned by artist John F. Townsend, represents a number of contemporary artists whose work has broad appeal among visitors to the area. "If someone comes in looking for more traditional art or Lowcountry art, we pull out a map and suggest other galleries in the neighborhood," notes Dunn. "All the French Quarter galleries are supportive of each other."

Members of the FQGA collaborate on projects throughout the year, including four art walks. On the first Friday of March, May, October and December, from 5 to 8 p.m., art enthusiasts can stroll the area's charming cobbled streets to discover new works of art.

"Typically, we invite the public to stroll from gallery to gallery, enjoying refreshments and meeting some of the galleries' featured artists," notes Dunn. "It's a great way for art lovers to experience various types of art offered in Charleston's French Quarter."

❖ Those looking to take home a modern work of art of their own can visit The Corrigan Gallery.

Located on the edge of the French Quarter at 135 Meeting Street is the Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston's only fine art museum. Established in 1858, the Gibbes houses over 10,000 historic and contemporary American works, including paintings, prints, drawings, photography, sculptures and miniature rooms.

Those looking to take home a modern work of art of their own can visit The Corrigan Gallery at 62 Queen Street, where the works on exhibit mix the charm of old Charleston with a contemporary edge.

While the French Quarter has the highest concentration of art galleries, it is not the only area of downtown Charleston that offers phenomenal art. Art aficionados also flock to King Street,

The Corrigan Gallery



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✦ For vintage European posters, the Julia Santen Gallery offers original, vintage poster art dating from 1890 to the 1960s.

the city's primary retail corridor since the 1800s. King Street features 20 city blocks bedecked with palmetto trees, charming architecture, inns, cafés and a variety of extraordinary shops and boutiques.

Lower King Street — from Broad Street to Market Street — is Charleston's Antique District, lined with an enclave of high-end antique dealers and art galleries, amidst the numerous shops and restaurants. At The Audubon Gallery at 190 King Street, you will find typical Audubon fare, such as illustrations of plants, flowers and animals. For vintage European posters, the Julia Santen Gallery at 188 King Street offers original, vintage poster art dating from 1890 to the 1960s.

Referred to as Charleston's Design District, Upper King — from Calhoun Street north to Coming Street — is probably one of the city's hottest tourist destinations today. Completely revitalized over the last several years, Upper King boasts an abundance of interior design studios, furniture stores and home décor shops. Of course, a design district wouldn't be complete without a smattering of upscale art galleries.

Art galleries truly abound in the culture-rich city of Charleston, from the French Quarter to lower and upper King Street. The number one tourist destination in the nation has re-emerged as one of the meccas for art acquisition in the world. ✦



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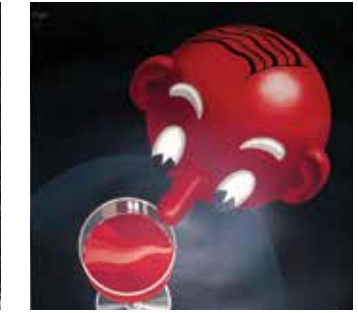
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Edward Lear
Plate 273 *Common Heron*, 1832–1837



John James Audubon, Havell edition, Plate 222 *White Ibis*, 1834



Pierre-Joseph Redouté
Plate 4 *Blue Lily of the Nile*, 1802–1816

LOCATED IN THE HEART OF CHARLESTON'S ANTIQUE DISTRICT, *The Audubon Gallery* offers the finest antique natural history art and limited-edition fine art prints, as well as antique decoys, contemporary bird carvings, Southern and sporting art. We feature a large selection of works by **Audubon, Besler, Redouté, Clark, Benson, Hutty, Verner** and many others.

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AHERN'S ANVIL

Modern-day blacksmith continues a Charleston tradition.

By Patra Taylor

W

hen the wire fence at 89 Brigade Street opens, a lumbering hound aptly named

Copper leads the way inside a small metal building. Various machines, typical of those found in most metal shops, are set across the concrete floor of

this busy workroom. But a more curious eye soon discovers the bits and pieces of masterworks-in-the-making that are scattered about the tables and workspaces. Anything but “typical” comes out of this metal shop.

Sean Ahern, the owner of Ahern’s Anvil, admits that his journey from Charleston and back again took an unexpected turn. “I went to art school at the Atlanta College of Art, intending to be a painter,” says the affable Ahern. “I took a three-dimensional course that got me interested in stone carving. One piece I carved needed a base, so my professor suggested I have one of the seniors majoring in foundry teach me to weld. I thought, ‘I can do this.’”

Ahern’s focus shifted from painting to the sculptural/three-dimensional side of the arts, and his interest in metals — particularly bronze and iron — grew.

✦ “Whenever we can, we always try to bring art into it. That’s what I love most about this business.”

As he evolved from painter to artisan, his inspiration remained the same: the natural shapes and organic movement of his surroundings, which he incorporated into his work.

“After I graduated, I became an apprentice in Atlanta, where we did high-end blacksmithing work and public sculptures,” continues Ahern, who earned his degree in foundry. “After two years there, I went to France to study at École des Beaux-Arts in Saint-Étienne, France, where I learned even more blacksmithing skills.”

Ahern spent more than a year in France before the beauty of the Charleston Lowcountry beckoned him home. In 2002, he opened Ahern’s Anvil, where he has perfected his ability to pull works of art from hunks of metal, including bronze, steel, copper, aluminum and stainless steel. Working with a small crew, the shop crafts custom pieces — everything from fountains and light fixtures to gates, stairwells, and furniture and accessories for both commercial and residential customers. “I do most of the design work... probably 95 percent of it.”

After a dozen years in the business, Ahern’s work can be found in homes and businesses across the region. Traditional wrought iron gates, fences and railings accent the exteriors of a number of antebellum homes and historic public buildings in downtown Charleston. His exterior work on the surrounding islands — particularly Kiawah Island — as well as the furniture and accessories he crafts for interiors allows Ahern’s modern flair and passion for decorative details to flourish.

Whether he’s working on a traditional piece or a custom-designed modern piece, Ahern believes it’s all part of the job of a modern-day blacksmith. “Whenever we can, we always try to bring art into it. That’s what I love most about this business.”

J. Kevin Foltz (2)

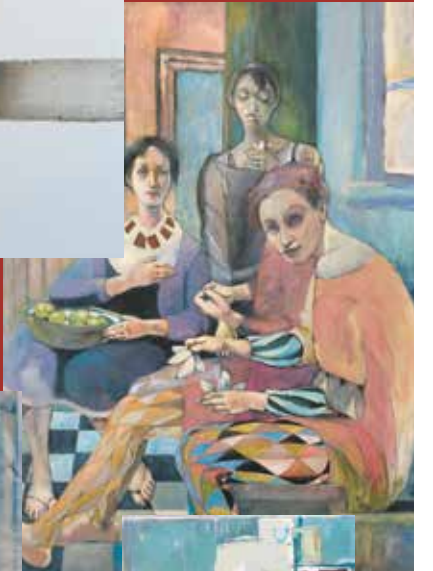
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SPOLETO FESTIVAL USA

Highlights of the 39th season of America's premier performing arts festival.

By Patra Taylor

W

hen Italian-American composer and librettist Gian Carlo Menotti

founded Festival dei Due Mondi (Festival of the Two Worlds) in Spoleto, Italy, in 1958, the name he chose reflected his intention to one day replicate a “twin” summer music and opera festival somewhere in the world. Because the Italian festival was initially designed as a window into the American performing arts scene for European audiences, it had a strong American administration from its inception.

By the mid-1970s, that administration was eager to unleash the Spoleto excitement on U.S. audiences. After quickly ruling out locations along the Hudson River in close proximity to New York City, all eyes turned to the American South.

According to Nigel Redden, the second location the administration looked at was Charleston. “At that time, Charleston was not as burnished as it is today,” states Redden, Spoleto Festival USA’s general director. “One of the things that had attracted Menotti to Spoleto, Italy, was the fact that the festival could be a much-needed economic engine for that small community. So the idea of going to a relatively poor town in the South made an enormous amount of sense just in terms of replicating the Italian festival in America.”

Of course, Charleston charmed Menotti and his search team with its antebellum architecture and Old World gardens; its wealth of theaters, churches and other performance spaces; and its 300-year tradition of



supporting the arts. “Charleston turned out to be just a wonderful place for the festival,” continues Redden, who worked for the American administration of Festival dei Due Mondi for five years during his youth. “It’s a place where artists can perform in responsive theaters. It’s a place where audiences can visit a city really worth discovering.”

In 1977, Menotti’s “Two Worlds” vision became a reality when the inaugural season of Spoleto Festival USA opened in Charleston, taking the country’s performing arts world by storm. Almost four decades later, Spoleto is internationally recognized as America’s premier performing arts festival. Each spring, for 17 days and nights, the festival fills Charleston’s historic theaters, churches and outdoor spaces with performances by renowned artists, as well as emerging performers in dance, music, opera and theater.

“Spoleto is driven not necessarily by big names but by repertory,” notes Redden, who is responsible for all aspects of the festival. “It’s driven by a very interesting mix of programs.”



Redden refers to highlights of the 2015 season to illustrate his point. The lineup included the world premiere of the contemporary opera *Paradise Interrupted* at Memminger Auditorium. Also, the world premiere of a new Spoleto Festival USA-commissioned performance edition of Francesco Cavalli’s *Veremonda, l’amazzone di Aragona* was performed in the first staging of this Baroque opera in over 350 years — and first American performances — at the Dock Street Theatre. “Although not well known today, Cavalli was an enormously important composer in his day,” notes Redden. “This opera was last performed in 1653. The fact that it can come alive again in Charleston in 2015 is extraordinary.”

Also of note is that Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre Company made its Spoleto Festival USA debut with the first U.S. performances of a brand-new production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Dock Street Theatre. “This play was written about 50 years before Cavalli’s opera,” says Redden. “When you see his play on stage, William Shakespeare comes alive in a way he doesn’t simply by reading a book.”

A 1,000-year-old performance tradition from Vietnam also came to the festival for the first time with the debut of the Golden Dragon Water Puppet Theatre. Performances weave together fast-paced and fantastical traditional tales played out by puppets that dance, skip



and glide over the water’s surface. “This is an ancient form of puppetry in Vietnam that was first commented on by a writer in the 8th century,” states Redden.

He adds, “I think there is something wonderful about the juxtaposition of something that is 1,200 years old, with something that is 350 years old, with something that is brand new. The festival allows us to explore the past endlessly. The present, especially right now, is filled with a group of young artists who are crossing the lines between popular art and what we might call high art. They look at the world as an inspiration... as part of a palette that they can use for their own form of expression right now. I think that’s enormously exciting.”

Spoleto Festival USA celebrated its 39th season with over 150 performances taking place in 14 venues located throughout the historic city of Charleston.

Spoleto Festival USA (4)