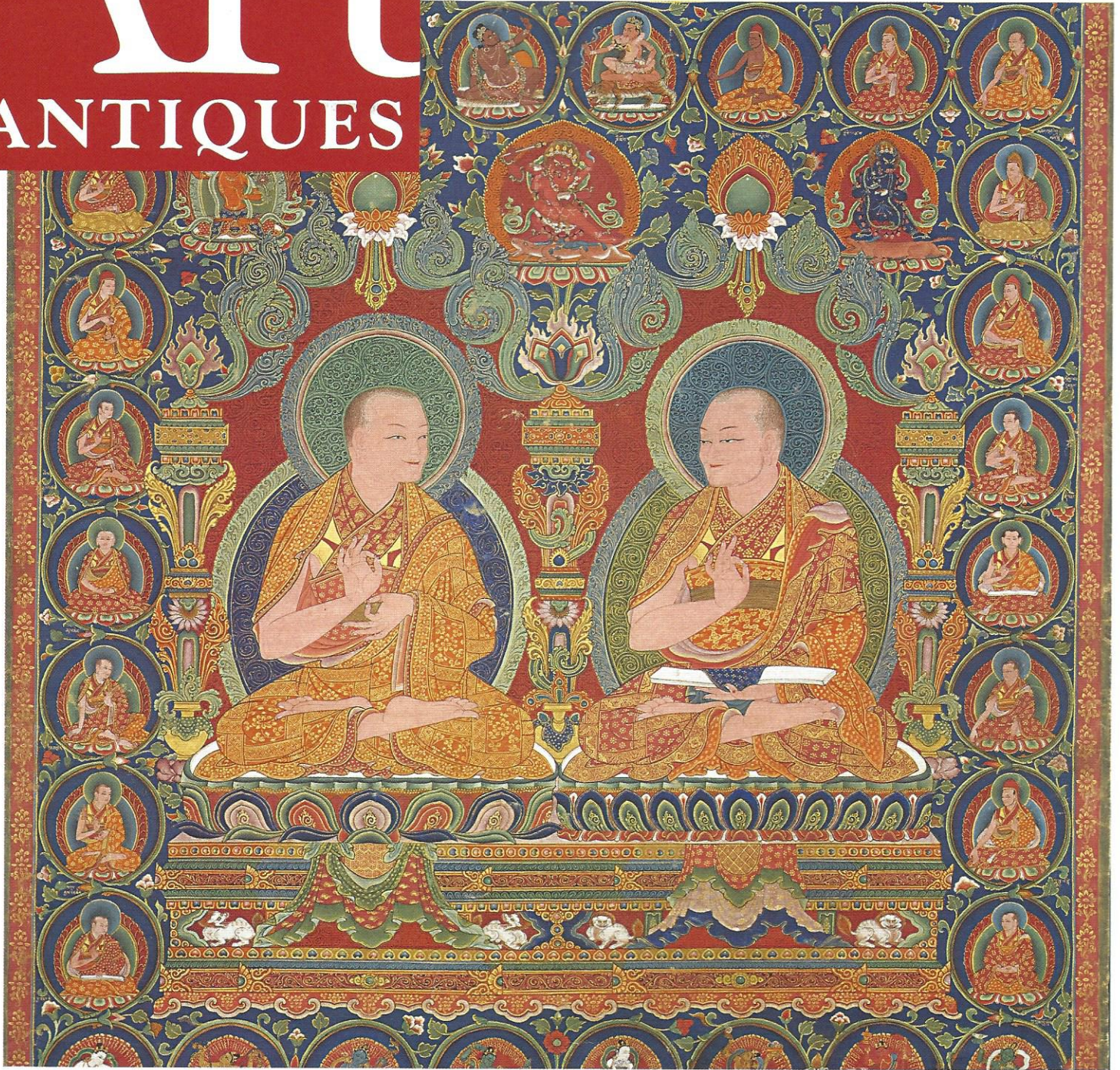


Art & ANTIQUES

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ASIA WEEK IN NEW YORK

Do the Charleston

FROM CLASSIC TO CONTEMPORARY, REGIONAL TO GLOBAL, DISCOVERIES ABOUND IN THE SOUTHEAST'S ART CAPITAL. BY ELIZABETH PANDOLFI



From top: Madonna Phillips, *Fenestration*, mixed media and glass, two panels, each 36 x 72 inches; Roger Dale Brown, *Wentworth Mansion*, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches.

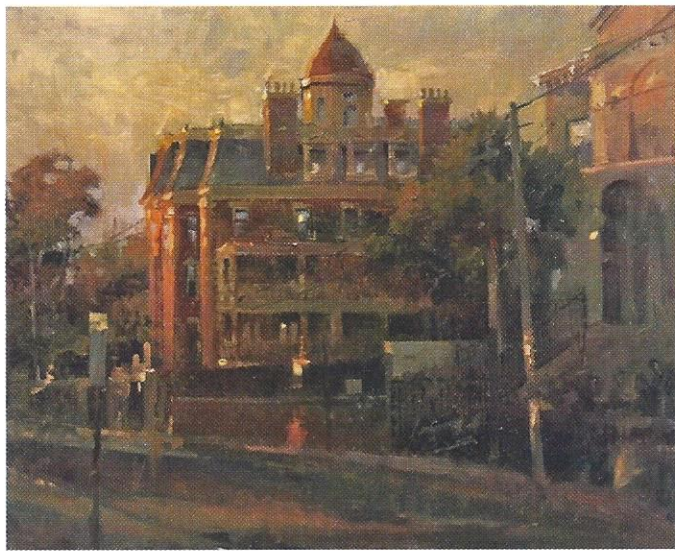
AS RECENTLY AS a few years ago, Charleston, S.C.'s rich contemporary art scene was also an overlooked one, with visitors to this tourism-friendly city coming more for the beaches than the galleries. And while the numbers may still be

in the beaches' favor, Charleston is quickly becoming known as a fine art destination. A walk through the historic downtown will take you past countless galleries and fine antique stores—there's even an art-centric hotel, **The Vendue Inn**, which opened just last year.

The city's largest concentration of art galleries is in the French Quarter, an area covering sev-

eral blocks that begins just south of downtown's kitschy Market Street. Home to 25 galleries that carry everything from 20th century landscapes to contemporary abstracts, the French Quarter is an excellent place for collectors and art enthusiasts. "Within these four or five blocks, we've got all different kinds of art," says Julie Dunn, president of the 20-year-old **French Quarter Gallery Association**. "There's a lot to offer everyone."

Dunn knows the city's art scene from many angles—she's a fine art photographer herself, as well as gallery director at **Atrium Art Gallery**, in the heart of the French Quarter. Atrium represents 16 figurative and abstract painters, as well as Dunn, who is their only photographer. "We get a lot of new collectors, lots of people who are buying their first home and looking for art to furnish it with," Dunn says. "Ninety percent of our clients are from out of town. Charleston's an art destination." While Atrium shows works by all of



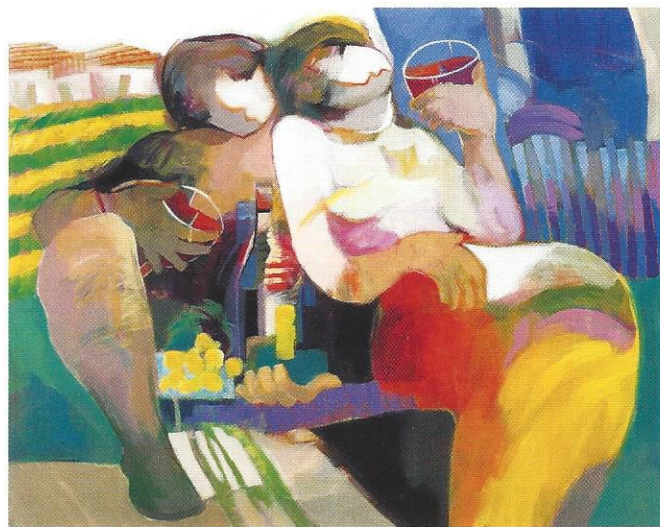


its artists year-round, in March the gallery will feature Maine painter Ruth Hamill. Hamill works in encaustic on canvas, creating moody, dynamic images of the sea. The show's opening on March 6 will be part of the quarterly **French Quarter Art Walks**, which happen the first Friday of each March, May, October, and December. While these are always the busiest art walks of the year, many downtown galleries host openings monthly, usually on the first Friday, as well.

One of Charleston's best-known contemporary galleries is **Robert Lange Studios (RLS)**, which is owned by hyperrealist painter Robert Lange and his wife, realist painter Megan Aline. In March, RLS will show the work of Kerry Brooks, a Midwestern-born painter. "Kerry's really interesting because she fell in love with the classic Russian figurative painters, and she went and studied in Russia for five years," Lange says. "She came back with this incredible

ability to paint the figure in this beautiful, Old World style." The works that Brooks will show, Lange adds, "are reminiscent of Gustav Klimt's work — they're very highly rendered." Next month, RLS is hosting a highly unusual group show, which has RLS painter Nathan Durfee collaborating with 12 other artists, including street artist Patch Whisky and painters Kevin Taylor and Karen Ann Myers. Durfee, who paints brightly colored narrative works filled with storybook-like characters, first explored collaborative painting with both Lange and Aline a few years ago; he and Aline ended up creating a series of

From top: Booths at the Charleston Antiques Show; Hessam Abrishami, *Afternoon Amor*, giclee, 24 x 30 inches.





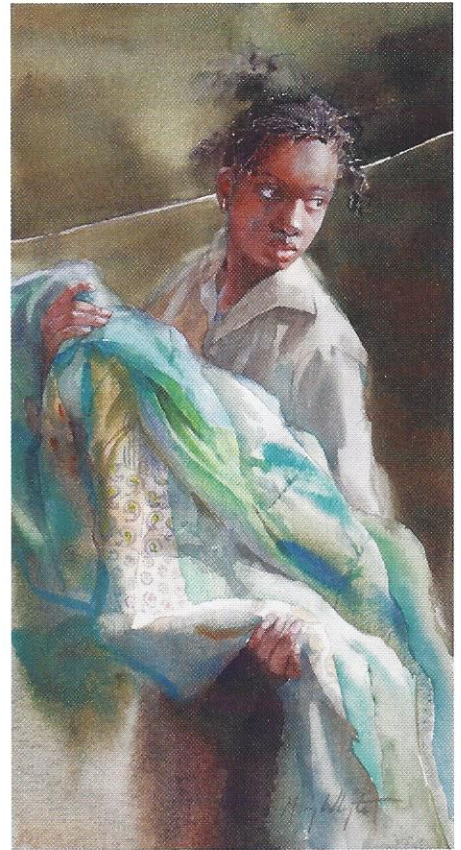
Long-billed Curlew (STAMEN: WASHINGTON; LEG: JOHN J. AUDUBON)

Clockwise from top left: John James Audubon, *Long-Billed Curlew*, *City of Charleston*; Mary Whyte, *Little Turquoise*, 2014, watercolor on paper, 14 1/2 x 7 1/2 inches; Colin Fraser, *Drift*, egg tempera on panel, 24 x 48 inches.

paintings together in 2012, all of which sold almost immediately.

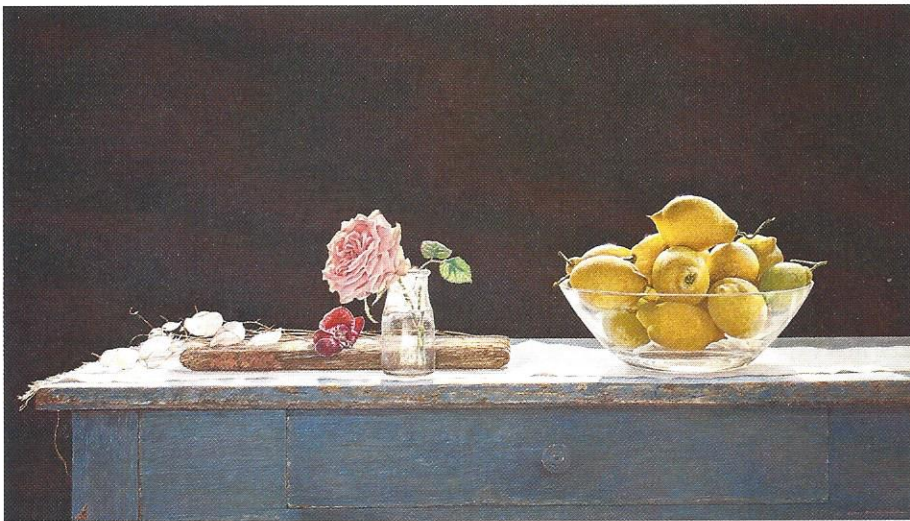
“We have no idea what these paintings are going to look like,” Lange says. “Every piece will be started by one of the artists, and then they’re willing to sacrifice their paintings to Nathan, who will finish them. Anyone who’s a fan of both Durfee and one of these artists—this is a chance for them to own something that might never exist again.”

Just a couple of blocks from RLS, *The Vendue Inn* is a boutique hotel that reinvented itself as an art hotel in early 2013. Filled with works by artists from across the country and the world, the inn hosts two



shows per year that last six months each. The Vendue hired Lange and Aline to curate their collection, so the couple stays busy there, as well. The inaugural exhibition, “I See a Pattern,” opened in November and will be on view through April. Comprising paintings and sculptures by 40 artists, the show consists of a huge variety of interpretations of the “pattern” theme. One of those interpretations is an interactive sculpture—a full-body sized version of the Pinscreen toy that sits in the hotel’s rooftop bar.

If you like your art a little more traditional, Coleman Fine Art on Church Street represents famed Lowcountry watercolorist Mary Whyte. Whyte is known for her portraits, especially of members of the Gullah communities that live on the rural Sea Islands around Charleston and Beaufort. “Right now we’re the exclusive representative of Mary Whyte,” gallery owner Sharon Crawford says. “We have any and all of her paintings that would be available.” As of this year, Coleman is working with only Whyte and no other artists, and they show her work year-round.





Pinkney Herbert, *Faucet*, 2014, pastel and ink on paper.

At **Ann Long Fine Art** this month, visitors can see works by classical realists Kamille Corry and Louise Fenne. Both women studied painting in Florence, among other locales, and both bring a stillness and clarity to their canvases. Ann Long also carries highly collectible etchings by Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, an early 20th-century artist and teacher who is, according to most, South Carolina's best-known female artist.

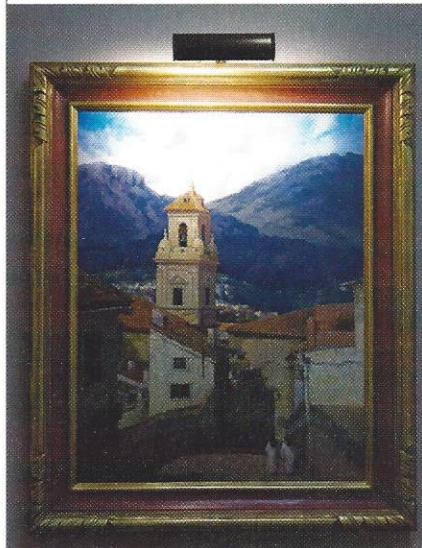
Another gallery offering more traditional works is the **Sylvan Gallery**, owned by Santa Fe transplant Joe Sylvan. Sylvan and his wife opened their gallery shortly after moving to Charleston in 2002, and they represent an extensive roster of realist and impressionist painters and sculptors, most of whom take a classical approach to their work. As he puts it so succinctly, "Our cows look like cows." Throughout March, the Sylvan Gallery will host an exhibition of works by Roger Dale Brown, a Tennessee-born plein air painter. He'll be showing works created both in-studio and at various spots in Charleston. "To visually absorb and become familiar with a scene on location is an important part of my process," Brown says. "It's exciting to discover new areas, but it's even more exciting when you have the ability to immerse yourself into the details and nuances, broadening your understanding of the moment."

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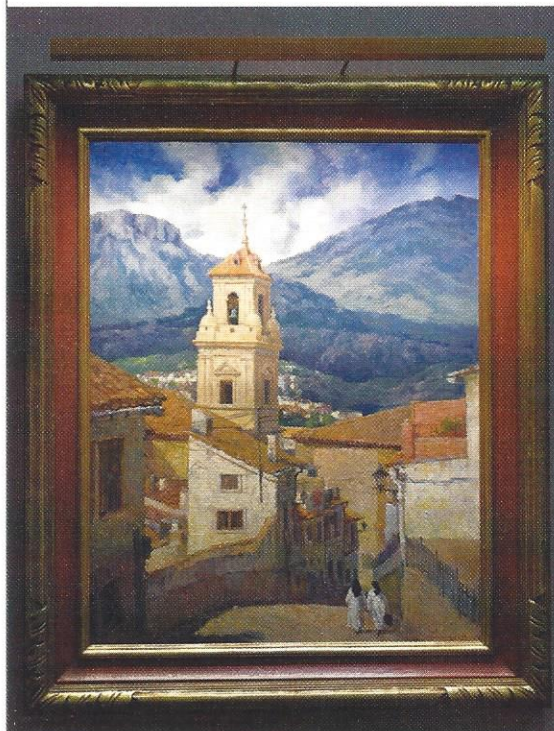
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George Stern Fine Art



Bells of San Salvador by Junn Roca
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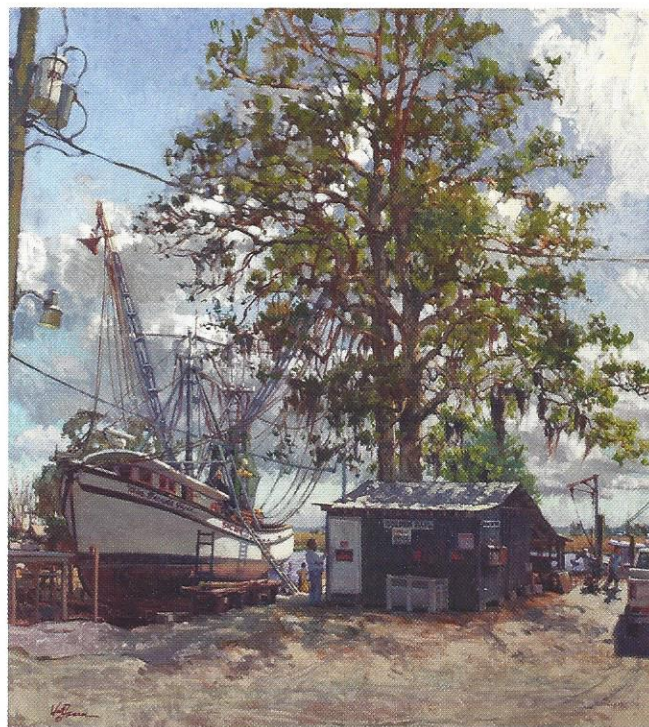
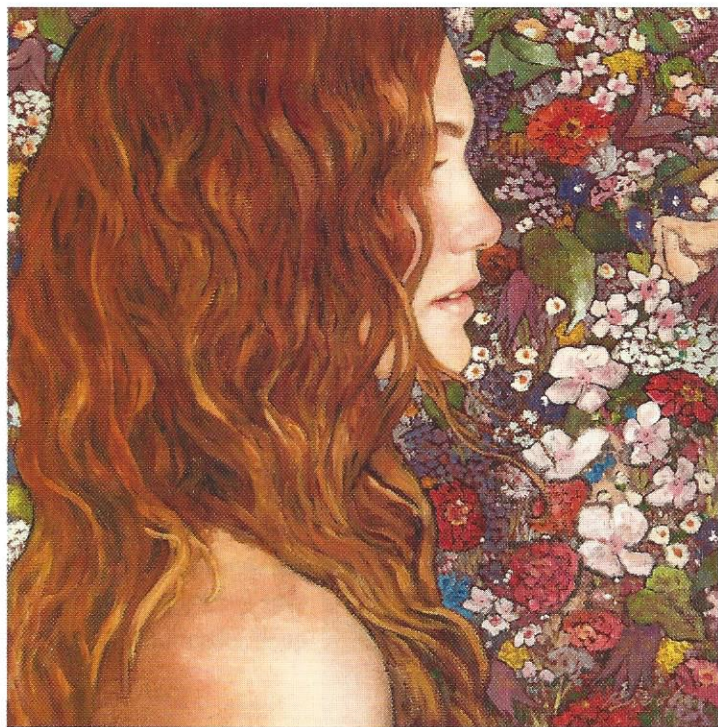
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Clockwise from top left: Kerry Brooks, *Antheia*, oil on panel, 10 x 10 inches; West Fraser, *Golden Rail*, oil on linen, 40 x 36 inches; Karen Anne Myers, *Geo Stripes*, oil on canvas, 60 x 36 inches.

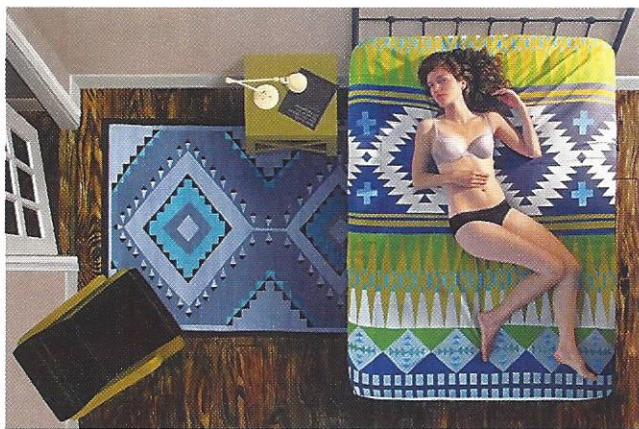
Principle Gallery, a 21-year-old business based in Alexandria, Va., opened a Charleston branch a year and half ago. “Charleston is a great art town, one of the country’s top tourist destinations, with interesting architecture, culture, and food,” says director Clint Mansell of the gallery’s decision to open here. “We do mostly contemporary realism—some abstract works, but mostly representational, from hyperrealism to cityscapes, mostly in oil.” Among the gallery’s artists is Colin Fraser, a Glasgow-born still life specialist who paints in egg tempera. In March, Principle will be showing works by Sergio Roffo and Gene Costanza.

Also with affiliations outside Charleston is **The Audubon Gallery** on King Street. It’s been in business since 1987—which makes it the city’s oldest art gallery—and 2003 joined forces with Joel Oppenheimer, Inc., of Chicago, also a specialist in the works of John James Audubon and allied 19th-century

naturalists. “We carry all the same natural-history art as in Chicago,” says co-owner Burton Moore, “but we’re more of a lifestyle store, so we have a lot of sporting art, decoys, and contemporary wildlife sculpture, as well as some Southern art.”

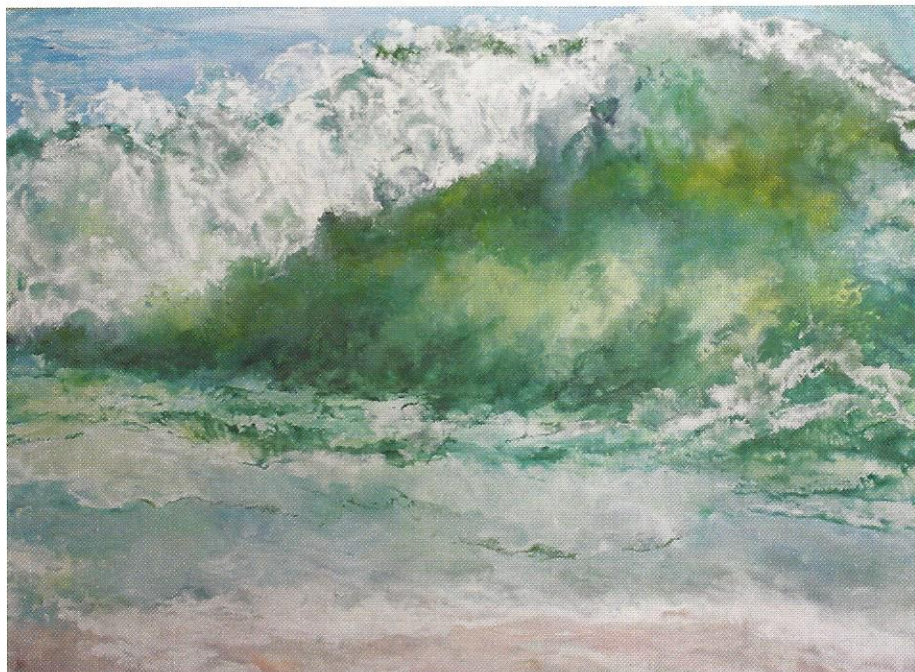
Helena Fox Fine Art specializes in American representational art and shows the work of 16 contemporary Impressionists, Luminists, Tonalists, and realists. Fox is the exclusive dealer of one of the South’s most prominent representational artists, West Fraser, and also shows sculpture by Kent Ullberg and hand-crafted jewelry by goldsmith Sarah Amos. “Our varied collection offers something to everyone,” says Fox, “and we are dedicated to assisting individuals and institutions in acquiring quality pieces for their collections.” The gallery’s March show features landscapes by Fraser as well as by Joseph McGurl and Donald Demers.

Then there’s the **Mary Martin Gallery**, which represents more than 75 artists who work in nearly every classical medium imaginable. Browsing at Mary Martin is almost like visiting several galleries at once—you’ll find art jewelry, furniture, photography, and murals, not to mention the usual paint-



ings, drawings, and sculptures. She represents many nationally-known artists—Graciela Rodo Boulanger, Larry Osso, and Alvar, for example—as well as new artists who are just beginning to establish their careers. Martin will show the work of Iranian-born painter Hessam Abrishami in March, with a black-tie-optional opening during the Art Walk, on March 6. “The thing that appeals to me about Hessam is something I look for in choosing artists—if the work can convey something personal to me,” Martin says. “With Hessam, I see relationships, people who love each other. And there can’t be enough love in the world.”

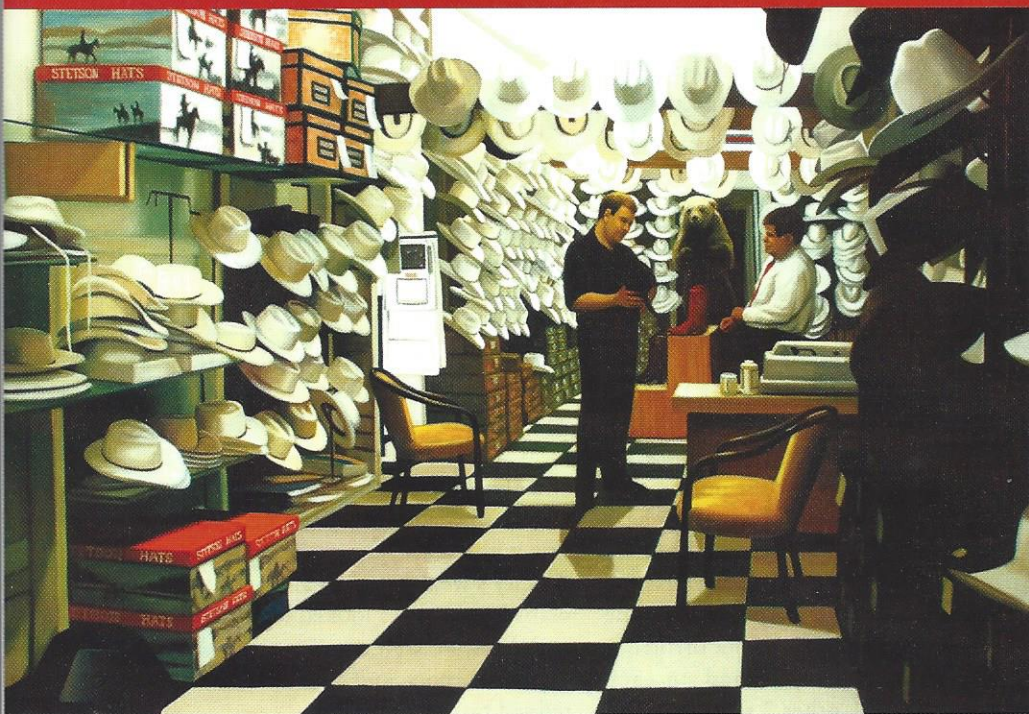
Outside the French Quarter—but still in downtown Charleston—you’ll find some of the city’s more forward-thinking art galleries, like the **Rebekah Jacob Gallery (RJG)**. Jacob is a consummate and dedicated gallery owner who tirelessly seeks out the very finest art of the American



Ruth Hamill, *Perfect Beach Day*, encaustic on canvas, 44 x 60 inches.

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Dale Kennington (born Savannah, Georgia, 1935),
It's A Man's World, 1996,
oil on canvas, 54 x 74 inches
Collection of Michael A. Mennello.