

CAROLINA ARTS

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Feature Articles

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June Issue 2007

Waterfront Gallery in Charleston, SC, Features Works by Karen A. Vournakis

The Waterfront Gallery in Charleston, SC, is pleased to feature a photographic and mixed media exhibition entitled, *Charleston Facades Revisited*, by Karen A. Vournakis, on view through June 30, 2007.

Vournakis' photographic work has been based on her interest in history and architecture. In an earlier portfolio of hand painted photographs entitled *Ancient Greek Archaeological Sites*, the walls and facades of ancient temples that reflected the ages with their peeling and marked surfaces interested the artist. In this portfolio as well as the current show *Charleston Facades Revisited Series*, the artist is intrigued with the style of architecture used in the construction of the



buildings that made them functional as well as decorative.

The Charleston subject matter Vournakis is drawn to is similar to the Greek sites; that is buildings with stately columns of classical style, with walls and surfaces that have a beautiful patina reflecting the passing of time. St. Phillips Church has been a primary focus over the past several years. This mixed media series is an interesting blend of classical architectural style inherent in the photograph of the building and a contemporary color palette used by the artist that blends photography and painting.

Natural light is a strong design element used to organize pictorial elements within Vournakis' black and white photographs. The interpretative aspect of color is applied later in the studio. The approach to the medium emphasizes the use of color to create an emotional interpretation, including colors and shades that were not necessarily a part of the reality of the original site or building.

The artist says, "My photographic approach is based on simple almost abstract images. Color is applied in a painterly manner to build texture on the surfaces of the gelatin silver photographic print. Through the laying process of applying oil paint, over crayons and pencils directly on the surface of the photograph, I attempt to capture and emphasize the passing of time reflected in the layering coats of paint and plaster on the wall and facades of buildings."

When Vournakis showed work at Reinhardt College of Fine Art in Georgia, the chairperson had this comment regarding the exhibition. "Personally I think her work is fantastic. In this age of new technology, some of the older, traditional approaches to making art are being set aside," says Reinhardt College Fine Arts Division Chairman Curtis Chapman, "she has resurrected a process, the hand coloring process, which has almost died out. Everyone can gain insight into a new, yet old approach to photography and how a photograph can evolve into a painting."

The artist's extensive education in the arts began at Albion College in Albion, MI, where she received a BA in Fine Arts and continued her studies at Syracuse University's Visual & Performing Arts where she holds an MFA in Photography, Magna Cum Laude. She taught photography at Syracuse University, Colgate University and Dartmouth College. Her many years of participation in the arts has allowed her to create an internationally known presence and her work has been included in many collections including the Bibliotheque National, (Paris), The Everson Museum (Syracuse, NY), The Erie Museum (Erie, PA), Kidder Peabody & Co. Inc. (New York City), The Atlantic Mutual C. (Madison, NJ), Fidelity Management & Research (Boston & London), Charleston Place Hotel (Charleston, SC).

Vournakis arrived in Charleston in 1995 and opened The Karen Vournakis Studio/Gallery on lower King Street which she operated for eight years. She has been a member of the Waterfront Gallery since 1997, an artists owned and managed gallery in the Historic District of Charleston. Since 1995, the Waterfront Gallery has been featuring original artwork in oil, watercolor, pastel, mixed media, collage, photography and monotype prints by eighteen lowcountry based artists.

For more information check our SC Commercial Gallery listing or call the gallery at 843/722-1155 or visit (www.waterfrontartgallery.com).

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