

Impressions of the Low Country:
the History, Culture and Ethereal Beauty
of a Landscape Preserved

by

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The majestic beauty of the sunrises and sunsets of South Carolina easily lulls one into a peaceful sense of harmony with nature. Living here instantly transcends me into a totally different world than what living up North is like, which I have always been accustomed to as a native- born New Yorker.

In the last few years, I have become a resident of South Carolina in a small town, called "Old Town Bluffton," in the County of Beaufort. The history here is astonishing, the original planters of indigo, rice and cotton to pre- and post- Civil War historical legacies remain here for all to see. The town has survived enormous upheaval with tremendous attacks. During the Civil War, the towns were burned practically to the ground by Union Troops. The spirit of human survival is palpable at every historical preserved home. The beautiful moss laden oaks tell the story of how the South survived and pushed onward. These trees have survived war and hurricanes, some as old as 350 years. These trees are known as the Succession Trees, revered for the meetings held under them, are documented as historical landmarks.

My focus is to create a sense of what one experiences from a town that encompassed the antebellum period. The architecture has survived in the buildings that are speckled throughout the town. It is my intention through my art to give a reflection of what life is like surrounded by ocean, sands and marshland. This environment represents a journey of good times and difficult history that brings the

celebration of human survival and strong spirit of people.

The natural surroundings and topography portray an area that is flanked by the Atlantic Ocean and the May River. The extensive waterways with marshes, estuary and miles of seashore, that are an exquisite paradise for the abundant sea and animal life. The eco-system that has been preserved and protected by local government. Due to this abundance of natural surroundings it is a hub for artists from around the world to participate in events held by galleries and universities.

The May River which winds its way up and around the many islands such as Hilton Head, Defuskie, Lemon, Hunting and Pinckney is a habitat for sea-life with its brackish waters. These waters which over time are half salt water, half fresh water have supported the economy that till today is a resource for fishing. For over a hundred years they supported rice marshes and indigo which were tended by slaves that were brought here from Africa. The African people brought their skills and worked with European ingenuity and created a trade that supported the Souths economy. My Senior project plein air paintings celebrate the waterways that include May River, Broad Creek and Calibogue Sound.

Inspired Mark Boedges a Low Country painter, and his stylized version of the May River in, "Low Country Storm," I went one step further.

"Beyond the Marshes," is a virtual double flip scene of May River at dusk and by

moonlight. Deep blue and greens are blended that build into a skyline that take the eye deep into the days end. When flipped over the viewer is taken into sapphire blue sky with a bright moon casting its glow among the stars.

In the painting titled “Spanish Moss Days End,” inspired by the landscape artist Stephan Duran, I tried to create a landscape that would invite the viewer to peer across the land into a sunset. The cotton candy skies, in this environment reflect on the marsh waters.

In my ocean paintings, I try to give the viewer the visual experience of the ocean’s energy. The multi layered color distribution of oil painting using glazes is meant to give the paintings a glowing effect of the sunset lighting through the waves. My intention was to illuminate the surf zone of the waves pushing forward to the shore.

These painting reference different views based on the styles I admired from artist William Deshazo and artist Tom Jordan. Through careful research and studying of classical techniques. I tried to create my own oceanic reference point that created the energy of the wave force, forward by the winds and the tide. I tried to create a sense romance using depth of color and stream- lined brush strokes trying to create the look of tremendous energy. I have been experimenting with glazes. I find that the effect improves how light travels through the paint and struggled with creating this effect.

My first paintings were more experimental where as my last four large paintings reflect what I was trying to convey. "Calm Sands," painted plein air was done by Hunting Island a quite windy coastline surrounded by the destruction of recent storms. There the soft sands and ebbing late day surf caught my attention in the small alcoves along the shoreline. "Rolling Seas," represents the high surf and tumultuous storm waves after a hurricane. Hurricane Dorian drove in massive waves and left us with amazing beauty. The dripping water cascading down the rocks and the glinting look of the sand coming toward the viewer was what I was trying to convey to distinctly bring the sense of calm to the shoreline after a wild ride of currents that raise high crests. The division of the two opposing visuals are constantly seen on the beaches here.

"Oceans Serenade," brings the viewer into the detail of the smaller interesting seashore visuals. "Twin Peaks," represents the literal doubling of power brought forward.

Depicting the look of the energy of the wave and power of the ocean fascinates me. My intention is to transfer the look of the energy of the wind on the ocean and create a stunning sharp accurate look on canvas. Contrasting the sky and the clouds with luscious color with waves below was is my ultimate ambition. My desire was to create that space on canvas that brings the viewers eye forward. I believe I was successful. "Sunrise Serenade," challenged my skills as a painter striving to create

the light that shoots through the wave, and also the skill to create clouds that are dreamlike but real.

I was raised with vacations at the New Jersey shore, trips to Hawaii and a trip to Mexico. I spent two weeks on a Wind Jammer Cruise, where I experienced the seas power and it became what motivated me to paint it. I will continue to experiment and improve my skills as a painter expressing the beauty of nature around me. In this process, the extensive idea of the culture of the Low Country is conveyed because the communities are tied to the islands encompassing this area.

Inspired by the docks and Piers in Old Town Bluffton, the fishing and Oyster Trade still remain all along the coastline. I worked in watercolor by the May River with “Pier at Sunset”. This piece is quite large and the use of warm colors was important in that it accentuated the deep color of the wood dock. Rackstow Downs also helped inspire this piece, given his work with structural architecture in space and nature combined. His work also represents the culture and nature and landscape.

Included in my Senior project are “Sands Repose,” and “Evening Delight.” These paintings represent the beaches of Dresden and Coligny, on Hilton Head Island. The sailboats in the distance on a quiet afternoon represent much of what is seen

off shore. In Contrast, the rich colors inland are what is experienced only a short walk off the beach.

“Koi,” a watercolor is inspired by peaceful, dreamy, delicate fish of the area. Low Country is surrounded by the fishing trade of sporting fish as well, but Koi hold a special interest to me, due to their soft diaphanous fins and calm demeanor. They are seen in ponds in Bluffton and in pools or fountains in South Carolina.

“Portrait of a Woman” is inspired by the wealthy aristocrats of the Civil War Era. The image of a woman by candle light is seen in many of the historical homes and Galleries throughout Bluffton and Beaufort County. Tours of homes in “Old Town Bluffton,” such as “The Heyward House” and “The Fripp” house and “Seven Oaks,” all bring back the stories and history. The glowing image of a women’s face following you around a room wherever you stand gave me pause. I should hope my rendition has a similar effect.

The black and white ink series of four pieces represent the people known as Gullah. They are the story tellers and they are quite spiritual and many live in Bluffton and on Defauskie Island across the sound. The small cabin like structure, entitled, “Slave Quarters,” was exactly that. At times as many as twelve people including children slept and lived in these tiny homes behind plantation homes. “Church of the Cross,” and “Seven Oaks” and “Daddy’s Girl,” indicate what you

see in Bluffton. They are all within a ten mile radius of one another including dozens of homes that are still original to the Civil War Era.

I have enjoyed documenting the beauty of nature and culture here and hope to continue to challenge myself to develop skills. The many galleries in the area lend themselves to artists and multiple opportunities to take classes with incredible talent. The availability to join events and clubs are extensive.

In closing my impressions of the art and beauty and unbelievable amount of history here is stunning. I consider it a gift to be able to study art and be inspired by nature and history. It is my intention to continue to create and in the near future show my work at one of the galleries and eventually connect with a career that needs and requires a background with experience in the arts.



"Beyond the Marshes" 12x36 Oil



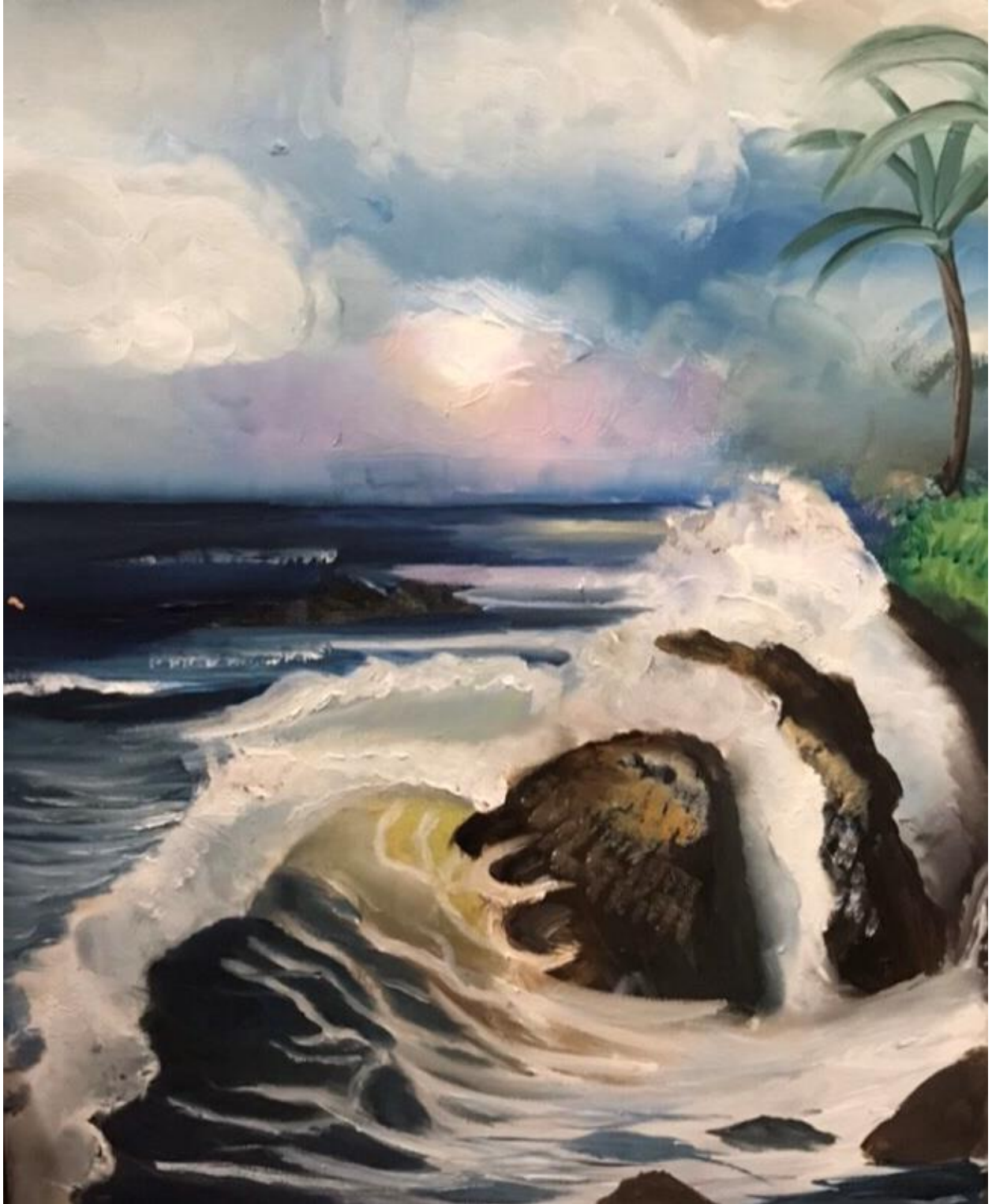
"Spanish Marshes Days End" 24x36 Oil



"Calm Sands" 20x26 Oil



"Rolling Seas" 24x36 Oil



"Oceans Serenade" 20x26 Oil



"Twin Peaks" 24x36 Oil



"Sunrise Serenade" 40x30 Oil



"Pier at Sunset" 42x120 watercolor



"Sands Repose" 12x18 watercolor



"Evening Delight" 22x30 watercolor



"Koi" 12x16 watercolor



"Portrait of a Woman" 20x23 Oil



"Slave Quarters" 17x14 ink



"Church of the Cross" 17x14 ink



"Seven Oaks" 17x14 ink



"Daddy's Girl"

References

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Chepesiuk, Ron. South Carolina's Low Country- Unforgettable Images of the Palmetto State– Charleston, South Carolina: Gibbs Smith. 2000.

Fulgram, Jeff. The Bluffton Expedition: The Burning of Bluffton South Carolina During the Civil War. South Carolina. 1st Ed. 2012.

Gross, Steve. Historic Charleston and the Low Country. Charleston, South Carolina: Wildsom, 2016.

Wyland, Robert. America's Artists of Wyland Galleries Laguna, California: 2004.

Galleries:

Red Piano Art Gallery of Bluffton, South Carolina-

Events included showings of work by Mark Boedges- Bluffton in Plein Air

Portrait Artist- Stephan Scott Young

Carmellia Art Gallery-

Open House Event with art by Tom Jordan

Rhett Gallery of Beaufort, SC

Coastal Art Gallery of HHI, SC

Art Academy and Gallery of HHI, SC

SOBA Galleries of Bluffton, SC

Historical Society Homes Preserved and Museums

Heyward House circa 1841

Fripp House circa 1835

Card House circa 1825

Allen-Lockward House circa 1850

Seven Oaks 1850

Bluffton Oyster Factory Buildings and Pier 1900

Garvin- Garvey House 1870

Church of the Cross 1857

Campbell Chapel AME Church 1853