

THE ARTS – Sarasota Herald-Tribune

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Artists at Work: Up close and personal

By MARSHA FOTTLER, Correspondent



Susan Klein, with one of her acrylic paintings of Myakka River State Park, is one of the artists participating in the Creators & Collectors Tour.

For its 39th annual tour of Sarasota places where local artists live and work, the Fine Arts Society is concentrating this year more on the art itself rather than the places art comes from so studios will have just as much importance as the homes of the five participating painters and sculptors.



Susan Klein's acrylic painting of a snake at Myakka River State Park..
STAFF PHOTO / DAN WAGNER

Additionally, the \$20 ticket entitles guests to admission to a special exhibit and sale organized at the new Ulla Searing Student Center on the campus of the Ringling College of Art and Design. Twelve artists will demonstrate and sell their original works in painting, basket making, jewelry, pottery, sculpture and fine art photography. It's a chance for everyone to become a collector of original art produced and marketed locally.

Four of the artists on the tour route, Joseph Patrick Arnegger, Tim Jaeger, David Piurek and Scott Moore, are Ringling graduates. Susan Klein's MFA degree is from Kent State University, but she's the mom of a Ringling student. Susan Klein's painting studio is the small spare bedroom of a modest house she and her husband Albert (a retired college mathematics professor) bought in 1990, when they moved to Sarasota from Youngstown, Ohio. Her parents were already here.

"I saw the 'for sale by owner' sign while driving in the area and stopped to look at the house because I loved the quiet street, gravel road (paved now) and the fact that it was overgrown and private," she remembered. "I walked through the rooms and had the weird strong feeling that I belonged in this little house; I felt at home. But the house was under contract and I assumed my intuition had failed me. Two weeks later the owner called me and said the sale fell through and hoped I was still interested."

Klein's first studio was in the converted garage, but several years ago she moved into the house and the bedroom. The floor is white painted cement and the artist admits that some of her best painting is done to the background of afternoon soap operas on the small television on the desk. "The familiarity of the soaps is soothing and I can tell what time it is by what's on," she said. "My studio is tiny, but it's a friendly room and I have great

views outside to my tree hung with orchids, my garden and flowers in bloom. It's just right for me. The room gets enough natural light, but I don't depend on that light anyway, I paint to the light in the scene I'm working on."

Klein paints nature landscapes -- no people, no animals and no buildings. She finds her subject by taking a hike and sketches with a permanent black marker, ultra-fine, on drawing paper. Back in the studio, her paintings are done on well-primed cotton canvas, the under-drawing in charcoal. An acrylic wash of (usually) straight-from-the-tube colors defines the composition.

The artist enhances with colors with the addition of silver and gold pigments applied with brushes. Details are refined with oil paint markers. And if she wants further enhancements, she adds color washes. Klein works on 30-by-40-inch canvases but also likes the smaller 10-by-12 size because they are portable.

Since 2005, Klein has been a participant in an artist-in-residency program at America's national parks. She has worked and lived for six-week periods at five national parks so far including Everglades, Grand Canyon, Zion and Acadia. Additionally, since 1989, she has painted different scenes at Myakka River State Park more than 120 times.

"I don't read a book twice or see a movie twice, and I don't paint a scene twice," said the artist. "For me, each painting is special and specific to a given place and time. I am obsessed with giving shape to the painting's content from the first moment that I become aware of its presence within the landscape."

Since 1992 Klein has sold her paintings through the Clayton Gallery in Tampa, raising the issue that while Sarasota is a fine place to make art, it may not be a great place to sell art.

"For me, I'd say that's true," she said. "I've had some exhibits here in town, but there aren't as many art galleries as there used to be and I get the impression that the community is generally more supportive of the performing arts than the visual arts. But then, I'm not a self-promoter. My husband always made our living, giving me the freedom to concentrate solely on doing the work. My energy goes into the art, not into marketing. And because I'm doing large paintings now, I probably only turn out four a year. But, people who admire my work seem to find me."

Certainly, a lot will find her next week.

IF YOU GO

39TH ANNUAL CREATORS AND COLLECTORS TOUR

sponsored by the Fine Arts Society of Sarasota 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 12-13.

Tickets \$20 at any of the sites.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS:

Joseph Patrick Arnegger, 1342 Central Ave.
Tim Jaeger, 2748 Gulf Gate Drive.
Susan Klein, 1717 Mova St.
Scott Moore, Smart Castings, 2258 Industrial Blvd.
David Piurek, 964 Alameda Lane.
Art exhibit and sale, Ulla Searing Student Center, Ringling College of Art and Design,
2700 N. Tamiami Trail. 330-0680; www.fineartssarasota.com.

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