

Figure and form create drama for month-long exhibit on St. Simons Island

Atlanta-area artist Sabre exemplifies the spontaneity and energy typical of the artists in this exhibit.

By Judy Ellington
For Coastal Antiques & Art

A month-long exhibit opening May 1 at the Left Bank Gallery on St. Simons, "Figure & Form," is a showcase of paintings and drawings that includes abstractions and expressionistic landscapes, as well as the figurative works.

The depth of the show is significant. Internationally recognized artists are represented, as well as those making their gallery debut. There are paintings dating from the 1950s and 1960s, as well as those on which the paint is barely dry. There is also diversity in style, from the classical to the contemporary, from the minimalist to the inclusive. These extremes not only provide visual interest,

they also serve to underscore the breadth of the collection.

There are many outstanding works in this exhibit, including an early abstraction by Leonardo Nierman, the Mexican artist said to be represented in more museum collections than any other artist in the world. Portrait and figurative paintings from the estate of Roman and Constantin Catov are included, as are the colorful expressive landscapes of the contemporary French artist Bernard Ouile.

However, in a gallery full of others there is one painting so powerful that it immediately grabs your attention and beckons you forward for a closer look. The work is by Sabre, a young Atlanta-area artist whose paintings are quickly gaining an increasing circle of recognition beyond the galleries of the Southeast.

Her approach is fresh, full of spontaneity and created by capturing the maximum amount of energy with the least number of strokes. Unlike many artists who have found

their comfort zone in a particular palette and subject material, Sabre is constantly exploring and experimenting with both. She is equally adept at creating classical figurative works, as she is with painting abstractions or expressionistic landscapes.

This artist loves texture and has developed some novel ways to achieve it. The palette knife, her tool of choice, is used to carve into the layers paint applied to the canvas to reveal the colors hidden below. This technique is used to its greatest success in the artist's classical figurative works where the appearance of the canvas surface takes on that of a centuries-old fresco or unearthed pottery shard. Texturing and layering are taken a step further in her most recent works where painted strips of gauze have become an integral part of her compositions.

Now, back to Sabre's show-stopper painting, a large square canvas titled "A State of Grace." The power of the painting comes from the minimalist approach and the successful



"A State of Grace," by Sabre.

juxtaposition of the classical with the abstract. The work possesses the texturing techniques mentioned above and is developed from only five key elements.

The most obvious is the graceful head and shoulders of a young woman with upswept hair as seen from behind, the second is the sky-blue background, the third is a fluffy white cloud and the fourth is a

red line. The fifth element manifests itself when just inches separate the painting from the viewer. Even at this close range, only the truly observant will see the several lines of text running across the canvas. It's as though the artist wants to reserve these innermost thoughts for those searching her work closely enough to find them. That being said, to reveal how the text reads here would defeat the whole purpose.