

California dreamin'

The San Francisco-based **James Irvine Foundation** (through a \$500,000 grant to the Alliance of Artists Communities) will provide 20 Gulf Coast artists with one- or two-month residencies in California, including studios, supplies and stipends.

To be considered for the The Gulf Coast Artists Hurricane Relief Program, regional artists (in visual arts, performing arts, music, writing, digital and new media) must provide a cover letter and a completed application form by Dec. 23. Residencies begin in January.

Applications are available at www.artistcommunities.org. For information, write to mking@artistcommunities.org or call (401) 351-4320.

Closer to home

A **Studio in the Woods**, the West Bank artists' retreat, is offering eight four-week "Restoration Residencies" to visual artists, writers and musicians displaced by Hurricane Katrina, beginning in February 2006 and continuing through January 2007.

The residencies include lodging, food, materials, transportation, studio and stipend. Artists interested in the February residency must submit a completed application by Jan. 15. (Applications are due the 15th of each subsequent month.)

Applications are available at www.astudiointhewoods.org. For information, call (504) 392-5359.

Admiring photos

LeMieux Galleries, 332 Julia St., will present an ongoing benefit photo exhibit, "New Orleans Our Hometown, Photographs from a World of Admirers."

Interested photographers may submit New Orleans-oriented digital images to the gallery, which will be printed, displayed and sold (for \$25), proceeds to benefit A Studio in the Woods artists' residencies (see above).

For applications and information, go to www.noohit.org or call (504) 522-5988.

Doug MacCash writes about art. He can be reached at (504) 826-3481 or dmaccash@timespicayune.com

HARMONY IN NATURE



Ron Bechet and Adrian Deckbar capture the vigor of landscapes in their show at Palma Gallery

By Doug MacCash

Art critic

REVIEW

Long-time Crescent City art-watchers might find it hard to believe that an exhibit of works by Ron Bechet and Adrian Deckbar could be so harmonious that at times you forget where one artist leaves off and the other begins. But the paintings and drawings in their joint exhibit "Through the Woods: Two Views" at Palma Gallery are so similar in tone and intention that they're like separate branches of the same sycamore tree.

Xavier professor Bechet is well known for his lush, expressive Louisiana landscapes, suffuse with subtle sensuality. The mossy tree trunks look a little like nude human torsos. The tangled vines become clenched fingers. Patches of light in shadowy leaves become beckoning eyes. Bechet's forests are always alive with anatomical allure.

Deckbar's best-known paintings have similar themes but entirely different subject matter. Her hyper-realistic genre scenes, featuring wan, willowy females, alone, angst-ridden and amorous, were a mainstay of Hanson Gallery in the French Quarter for almost two decades. But two years back she began turning away from her dour, glamorous sirens. She replaced them with, of all things, studies of the Arkansas woods and close-ups of Crescent City live oaks, taking an unexpected turn into Bechet's territory.

She seemed to master the landscape instantly, translating the dark mystery of the women she once painted into the dark mystery of primordial forests. Trouble was, as Deckbar



STAFF PHOTOS BY ELIOT KAMENITZ

Ron Bechet and Adrian Deckbar at the Palma Gallery for their show 'Through the Woods: Two Views.'



Bechet's 'Water Muses' and Deckbar's 'Wild Landscape' share a tone and content that make for a splendid show that captures the power of the landscapes.

THROUGH THE WOODS: TWO VIEWS

BY ADRIAN DECKBAR AND RON BECHET

What: Landscapes by two well-known New Orleans artists.

Where: Palma Gallery, 828 Howard Ave. 598-2276.

When: Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m. to 3; Sat., noon to 5, through December.

Prices: Deckbar's works are \$650 to \$9,500. Bechet's works are \$400 to \$1,800.

exhibitions

Note: Galleries and museums having special events this week are indicated with a ♦

MUSEUMS

The Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden City Park, 606-4712. Outdoor exhibit of works by modern masters Henry Moore, Claes Oldenburg, Louise Bourgeois and dozens of others in a landscaped garden. Fri-Sun, 10 a.m. to 4:30. Free.

Ogden Museum of Southern Art 925 Camp

St., 539-9600. "Missing New Orleans," historic photographs, renderings and memorabilia of past landmarks, with recent Hurricane Katrina photos by David Rae Morris and "Ogden After Hours" roots music concerts from 6 to 8 on Thursdays (by admission, \$10). Regular hours, 11 a.m. to 4 Fri-Sun. Regular museum admission: Adults \$5, disaster relief workers \$4, and uniformed military free.

GALLERIES

A Gallery for Fine Photography 241 Chartres St., 568-1313. Blue-chip vintage and contemporary photography. Fri-Mon, 11 a.m. to 5.

Academy Gallery 5256 Magazine St., 899-8111. The annual faculty exhibition.

Mon-Fri, 10 a.m. to 2.

Alexander and Victor Fine Art 312 Royal St., 586-7555. Group show of gallery artists. Open daily, 10 a.m. to 5.

Arthur Roger Gallery 432 Julia St., 522-1999. "Comeback," group exhibit. Mon-Sat, 10 a.m. to 5.

Arts and Frames Gallery 503 N. Columbia St., Covington, (985) 867-9080. Grand opening group exhibit with works by Pat Adams, Carol Creel, Sue Sutherland and others. Tues-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4.

Barrister's Gallery 1724 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd., 525-2767. "All Dressed Up," a group show including works by Daphney Loney, Julie Pieri, G.A.S. and Dan Tague. Tues-Sat, 11 a.m. to 4.

Robert Bruno Gallery 900 S. Peters St.,

679-0001. A group exhibit of gallery artists. Tues-Sat, noon to 5.

Callan Fine Art 240 Chartres St., 524-0025. "Bring it on Back," an exhibition of paintings by Jim Pennington. Open daily, 11 a.m.-5.

Carol Robinson Gallery 840 Napoleon Ave., 895-6130. Annual Christmas Exhibition. Tues-Fri, 10 a.m. to 2; Sat, 11 a.m. to 4.

Cole Pratt Gallery 3800 Magazine St., 891-6789. "Coastal Landscapes," paintings by John Stafford and "An Unanticipated Journey," prints by Barbara Brainard, through Dec. Tues-Sat, 10 a.m. to 5.

d.o.c.s. gallery 709 Camp St., 524-3936. Ceramic sculpture by Cara Moczygemba. Tues-Sat, 11 a.m. to 5.

Fort Isabel Gallery 502 N. Columbia St.,

Covington, (985) 892-1841. "Kickin' Back," paintings by Carol Hallock, through Dec. Wed-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4.

Galerie d'Art Francais 541 Royal St., 581-6925. Group exhibit of gallery artists including "SpongeBob SquarePants" artist Todd White. Open daily, 10:30 a.m. to 4.

Galerie Rive Gauche 318 Royal St., 524-5623. Group exhibit of gallery artists including landscapes by Ford Smith. Mon-Sat, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30; Sun 10 a.m. to 5.

Guthrie Contemporary (formerly Evans Gallery) 3815 Magazine St., 897-2688. Selected works by Suk Ja Kang Engles and Auguste Garufi. Wed-Sun, 1 to 5.

Jean Bragg Gallery 600 Julia St., 895-7375. "New Orleans in the Artist's Eye," group exhibit of historic and contemporary art,



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NATURE, from Page 12

explained it, the Hanson clientele "didn't know what to make of the landscapes."

"Somehow," she said, "they didn't fit on Royal Street."

Though Deckbar's paintings of women are still available at Hanson, she was free to show her landscapes elsewhere.

That's where Palma Gallery owner Tony Clesi came in, offering Deckbar a slot. Deckbar told Clesi she'd be pleased to accept, but she doubted she'd be able to produce enough work to fill his large Howard Street gallery.

"I was more comfortable having a two-person show," Deckbar recalls. "So I was tossing around different people in my mind, looking for someone with the same reverence for the landscape, but not in a traditional way. I was literally standing beside Ron at the 'Hybrid' show (a recent group exhibit at Palma). I said, 'What would you think of having a show with me?' I told him, 'I've ventured into landscaping. I'm abstracting it a little bit, but not in the same way you do. It's not a literal view, not traditional, more in your face.'"

As Bechet recalls: "She thought it might be a good idea to do a show together. I thought it might be a good idea as well. . . . My work might have been different enough (in style) but similar in content."

The show seemed destined to be derailed by Hurricane Katrina, but in the weeks after the storm, Clesi contacted both artists to see if the show could go on as scheduled. And despite Deckbar's evacuation to Arkansas and Bechet's flight to Houston, it did — splendidly so.

The differences and similarities between the artists' techniques flit from place to place inside Palma Gallery like songbirds. Deckbar's silky photographic touch is a foil for Bechet's brusque brush strokes. Bechet's bold, brilliantly colored compositions are a sounding board for Deckbar's more complex arrangements, with their subtle shifts in tone and focus. Neither artist views the landscape from a discreet distance; both seem to climb into the undergrowth for an intimate, inescapable view.

For those who fear that the power of the old-fashioned landscape has been lost, it's a view not to miss.

IT'S TONIGHT! DON'T MISS IT!

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Contributing Artists: Jimmy Blanchard, Shirley Rabe Masinter, Alexander Stolin, Jan Hill Keels, Monica Williams, Rosemary Tell, David Dietrich, Red Beans & Nice & many more!

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