

Lowcountry Textures

Written by Margaret Evans

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The beginning of a new year can be a great time for a clean slate. Unfortunately, people often use this fresh start to commit to eating nothing but cabbage until they lose twenty pounds. While this is an interesting test of willpower, it will hopefully have worn off by the time you read this article, in favor of just a few more vegetables and a little more walking.

The members of the Beaufort Art Association also realized the opportunity to start 2012 with a clean slate, fortunately with more culture and less cabbage. Instead of a traditional exhibit, highlighting one or two featured artists, the gallery will ring in the new year with “Lowcountry Textures,” a show with pieces from many of our artists. The show will run from January 8 through February 18, with a free opening reception on January 13 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Members were simply asked to contribute a piece that displayed texture two-dimensionally or three-dimensionally. With such a broad theme, it has been extremely interesting to see the different artistic choices. Three artists, in particular, provide a great cross-section to understanding the idea of textures that the exhibit will capture.

Tom Van Steenbergh, who usually works in more two-dimensional art with paintings and text concepts, decided to create a three-dimensional work based on his appreciation of Lowcountry shores. The piece features a hand-painted display with carefully selected objects that remind

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him of the local beach aesthetic: polished sea glass, a bleached white shell core, and a crab shell.

Ellen Long took an entirely different approach to using texture. Her embossed pieces straddle the line between dimensions. While they can be hung in frames, the added texture is clear. To create an embossed piece, the artist creates a printing plate, on which a texture is carefully created. Then a piece of water-saturated watercolor paper is pressed against the plate under intense pressure in an etching press, and this embosses a three-dimensional image. Ellen then enhances the image using airbrushing or acrylic paints. As she explains, "I really enjoy working through this process, as the final printings are somewhat of a surprise and the chance for change on enhancement is endless."

Donna Ireton took yet another path to incorporating texture. Texture plays a large part in the handcrafted, coiled pine needle baskets that Donna creates. She collects local pine needles, which can be cleaned and dyed or left in their natural state, then binds them into coils with synthetic sinew. They can then be made into baskets by themselves, or can be formed around gourds or pieces of driftwood to achieve a completely different aesthetic effect naturally. She has discovered that while all these paths begin with her collecting of pine needles, they end with creating three-dimensional mixed media works of art.

This is just a small selection of the types of work that will be featured in "Lowcountry Textures," the new exhibit at the Beaufort Art Association Gallery. It will also feature other textured paintings, photography, mixed media, sculptures, jewelry, baskets, woodworking and artisanal creations. It is truly a show full of pieces with one purpose: to let those who attend touch and feel the Lowcountry.

The Beaufort Art Association Gallery is located at 913 Bay Street and is open from 10 a.m. through 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Please call 843.521.4444 for more information about the gallery or "Lowcountry Textures," running January 8th through February 18th.

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