

# High Art in the Lowcountry

CHARLESTON'S ART SCENE EMBRACES THE BEST OF BOTH TRADITION AND MODERNITY. BY ELIZABETH PANDOLFI



Kamille Corry, *Threads of Illusion* (detail),  
oil on linen on panel.

THERE WAS a time when Charleston, S.C., was a must-visit for history buffs and few others. But today, the beautifully preserved antebellum architecture, quaint cobblestone streets, and rich colonial and Civil War past hide another side of the city—one that's sophisticated, modern, and practically thrumming with cultural energy.

One of the best ways to appreciate this more contemporary element is to wander Charleston's many art galleries and institutions. Though there are still plenty of local landscape and architectural studies to be found—the city's built and natural beauty has a way of inspiring countless variations on similar subjects—with a lit-

tle forethought, art lovers can find a rich supply of contemporary pieces to suit their standards.

Charleston is situated on a peninsula, and some of the most beautiful waterfront views can be found along East Bay Street and the Battery. That's why many visitors spend much of their time here, in the neighborhoods known as the French Quarter and South of Broad. This is also where you'll find the highest concentration of art galleries. In fact, the French Quarter is such a densely packed art hotspot that it has its own promotional group, the French Quarter Gallery Association, which has been in existence for over 20 years. The 28 mem-



ber galleries collaboratively host art walks four times a year, on the first Fridays in March, May, October, and December, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Julie Dunn, director of **Atrium Gallery** and president of the Association, says that “everything from Charleston Renaissance to Lowcountry landscapes to contemporary art” can be found in the French Quarter. Atrium specializes in contemporary, particularly abstract, art, while Dunn is an artist in her own right, a photographer whose lens seeks out architecture, water, bridges, and street scene around the world, rendering them in dramatic black and white.

Another French Quarter stalwart is **Robert Lange Studios** (RLS). The gallery is run by a married couple, Robert and Megan Lange, both of whom are artists themselves—and it shows. “As artists first and gallery owners second, we make decisions based on what is best for the integrity of the work, and in turn it ends up being what is best for the business,” says Megan Lange. The gallery represents 18 painters, and all but three work in the realist or hyperrealist styles. One of those exceptions, Fred Jamar, has a fascinating take

on the typical Charleston scenes, painting the city’s well-known church towers, streetscapes, and sideways-facing homes (known as Charleston singles) in bright, vibrant colors with dark skies and his signature “bubble trees.” It’s as if they existed in a parallel world.

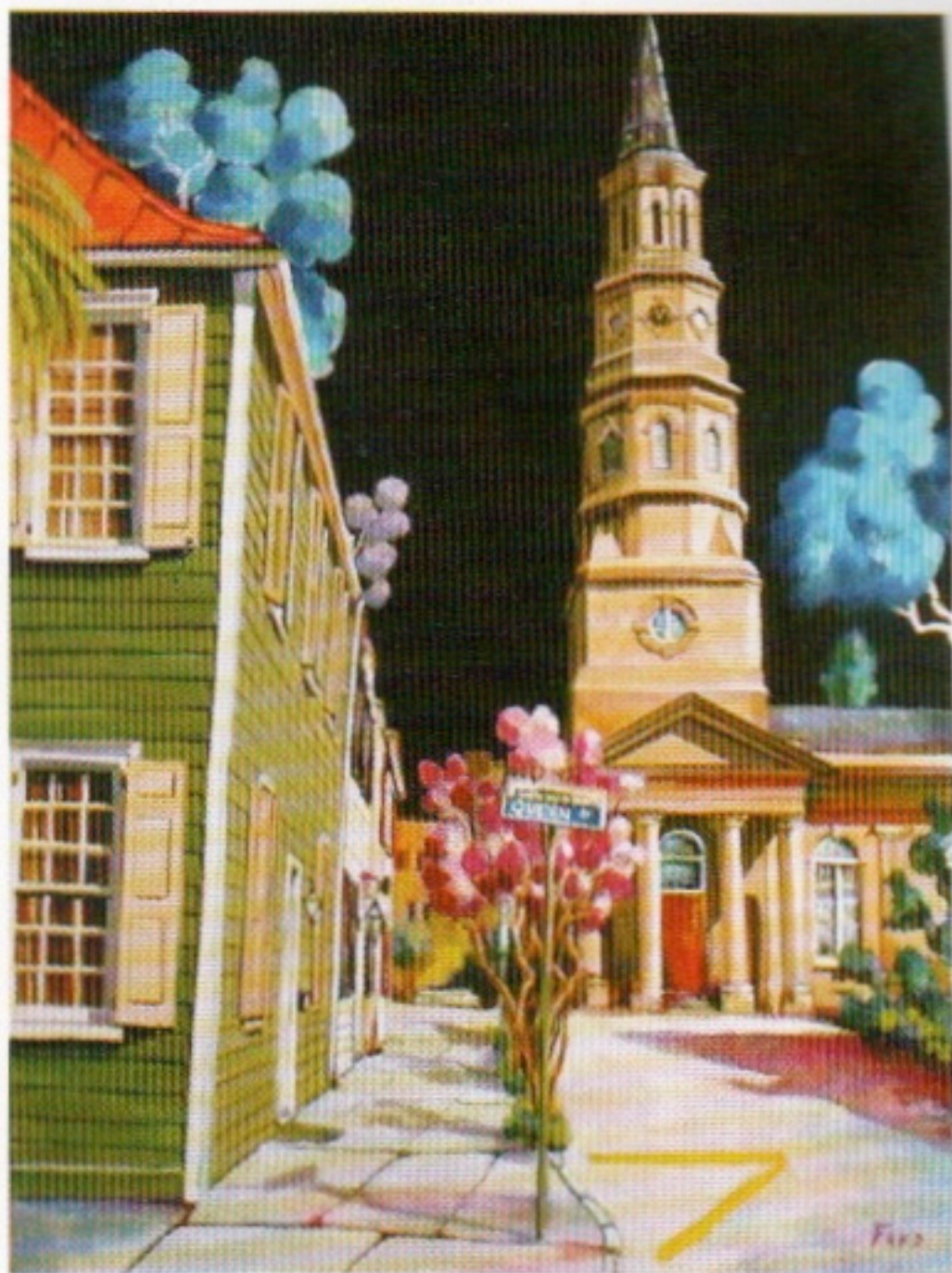
Just a couple of blocks up from RLS is the **Principle Gallery**, formerly known as the M Gallery. Principle purchased the M in late 2013, making it Principle’s second location (the first is in Alexandria, Va.).

Under the guidance of its enthusiastic gallery director, Carri Schwab, Principle has redefined and widened its focus. “Our perspective is based on a broad cross-section of established international artists within and pushing the boundaries of contemporary realism,” Schwab says. Principle’s list of artists is a long and growing one — their most recent additions are painters Anna Wypych and Karen Hollingsworth.

Schwab describes Wypych’s work as ranging from “figurative expressionism to almost Byzantine-influenced realism,” and since the 27-year-old artist joined Principle, her pieces have been

Clockwise from top left: Charlotte Foust, *Sunflower*; Evan Armstrong, *Cosmic Orphan*; Darrell Davis, *La Palre d’Amour*; a selection of antique watch fobs.





Clockwise from top left: Fred Jamar, *Another View of Charleston*; Julie Dunn, *Julie Beach*; Laura Adams, *Turkey*.

picked up by museums in Spain and Paris.

Also in the French Quarter is Coleman Fine Art, which represents silkscreen artist John Thompson, who creates landscape images on rice paper, and realist painter Mary Whyte. Whyte is one of the South's most well-known realist painters, famous for her paintings of ordinary people going about their daily work. Whyte has also spent a good deal of time with members of the Gullah community, descendants of African slaves who have made their homes on the coastal islands off of South Carolina and Georgia. Many of her paintings focus on scenes of Gullah life, and she expects to hang some new works in Coleman Fine Art throughout the year.

Mary Martin Gallery, the city's largest, represents more than 75 artists who work in media ranging from furniture to portraiture. Some of the gallery's most notable artists include painters Jean-Claude Gaugy and Andre Kohn, and sculptor Martin Eichinger. Owner Mary Martin offers visitors pieces in as many styles as there are artists, which makes her space the perfect place to drop

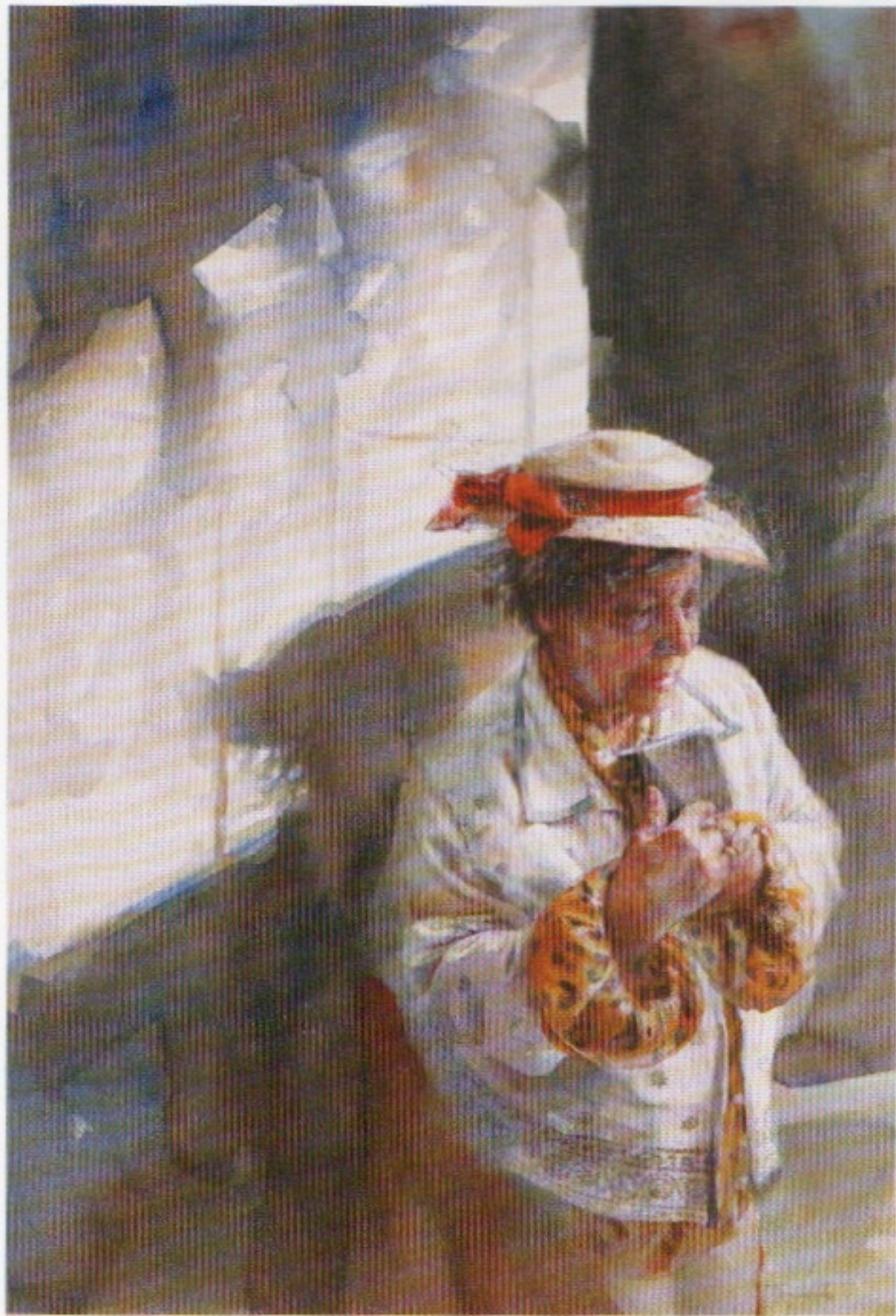
in with a few friends—chances are there will be something for everyone. Martin has joined with The Vendue, a historic boutique hotel in the French Quarter, to curate a collection of artworks that is on view in the hotel and available for purchase.

Horton Hayes Gallery, at State and Queen Streets, features contemporary landscapes, still lifes and wildlife art, representing 15 artists, five of them locally based, says Nancy Horton, who owns the gallery along with her husband Mark—also a gallery artist who does landscapes—and Cynthia Hayes. One of Horton Hayes' stars is Clive R. Tyler, a pastel master who works in New Mexico and Colorado and has a penchant for Western wildlife.

For contemporary paintings, drawings, and sculpture in the classical tradition, go to Ann Long Fine Art. Established in 1997, the gallery espouses the "slow art" concept, whose practitioners train as apprentices in ateliers, work directly from life, and for the most part embrace a painterly aesthetic. One of its proponents is Kamille Corry, a figural painter who favors oil on linen. In addition to contemporary art, Ann Long also represents the estate of German Expressionist Otto Neumann, known for his monotypes, or unique, uneditioned prints.

Anglin Smith Fine Art is another excellent





Mary Whyte, *Open Door*, 2013.

source of contemporary realism, featuring Lowcountry landscapes and abstract works—both genres equally striking in their distinctive use of color—by Betty Anglin Smith, as well as works by her children, painters Jennifer Smith Rogers and Shannon Smith and photographer Tripp Smith (the three are triplets). Art here is decidedly a family affair but not exclusively so; the gallery represents several other artists including sculptor Darrell Davis, who renders animals both wild and domestic, on legs or wings, in bronze. Wildlife art will be celebrated this month, February 14–16, at the 32nd annual Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, a show to be held in multiple venues throughout downtown Charleston. The featured artist this year will be Chad Poppleton of Cache Valley, Utah.

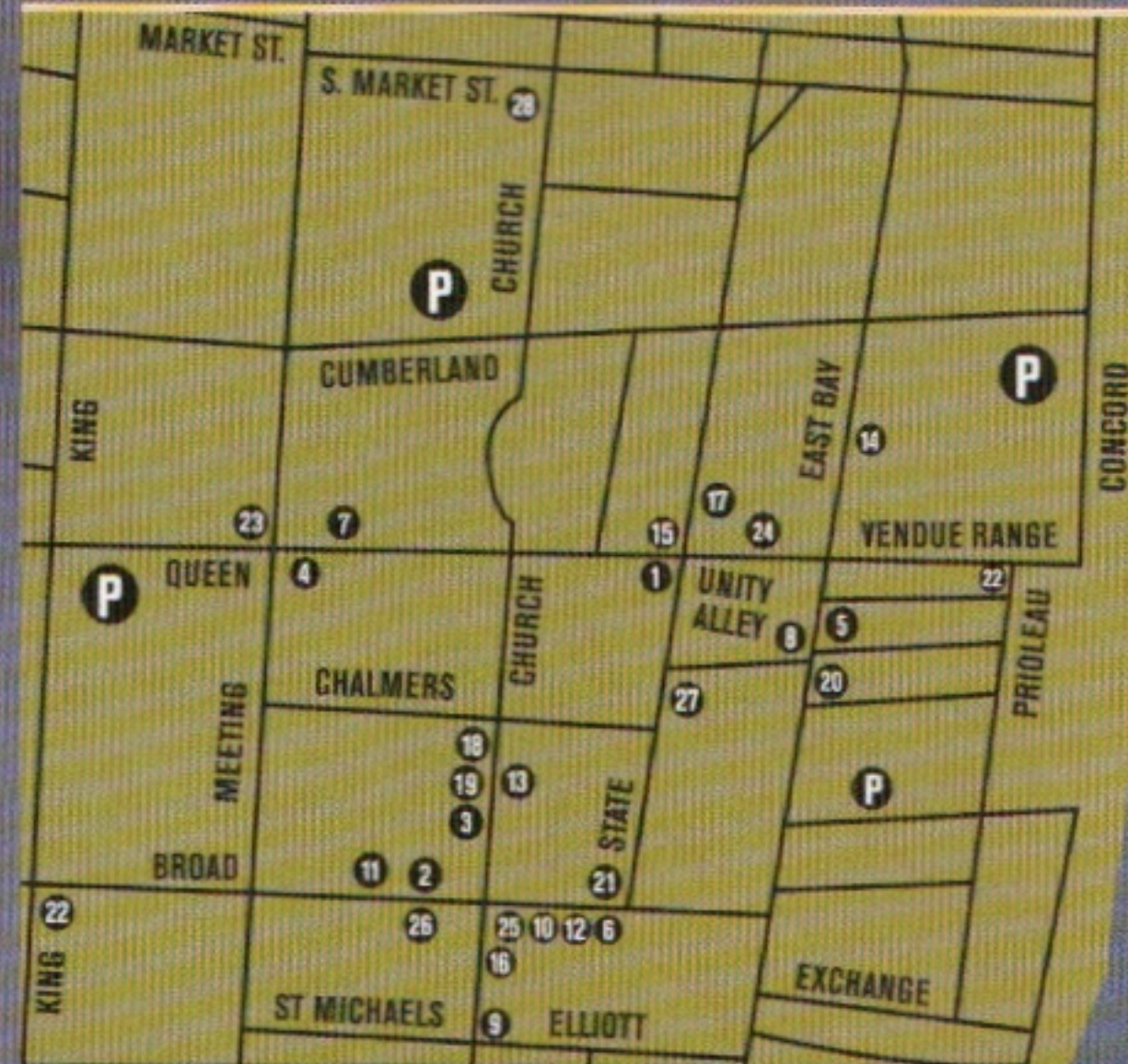
Contemporary art is hardly confined to the city's southern, or lower, peninsula. Over the past five years, formerly dilapidated working-class neighborhoods on the northern end have been revitalized and are quickly becoming destinations all their own. In Cannonborough-Elliottborough, you'll find the George Gallery, a bright, cheery space that former Martha's Vineyard-based curator Anne Siegfried Elkins opened in the fall of 2013. Elkins has taken a sharply focused approach to her gallery, beginning with just five artists and expanding

# CHARLESTON

## An Art Destination

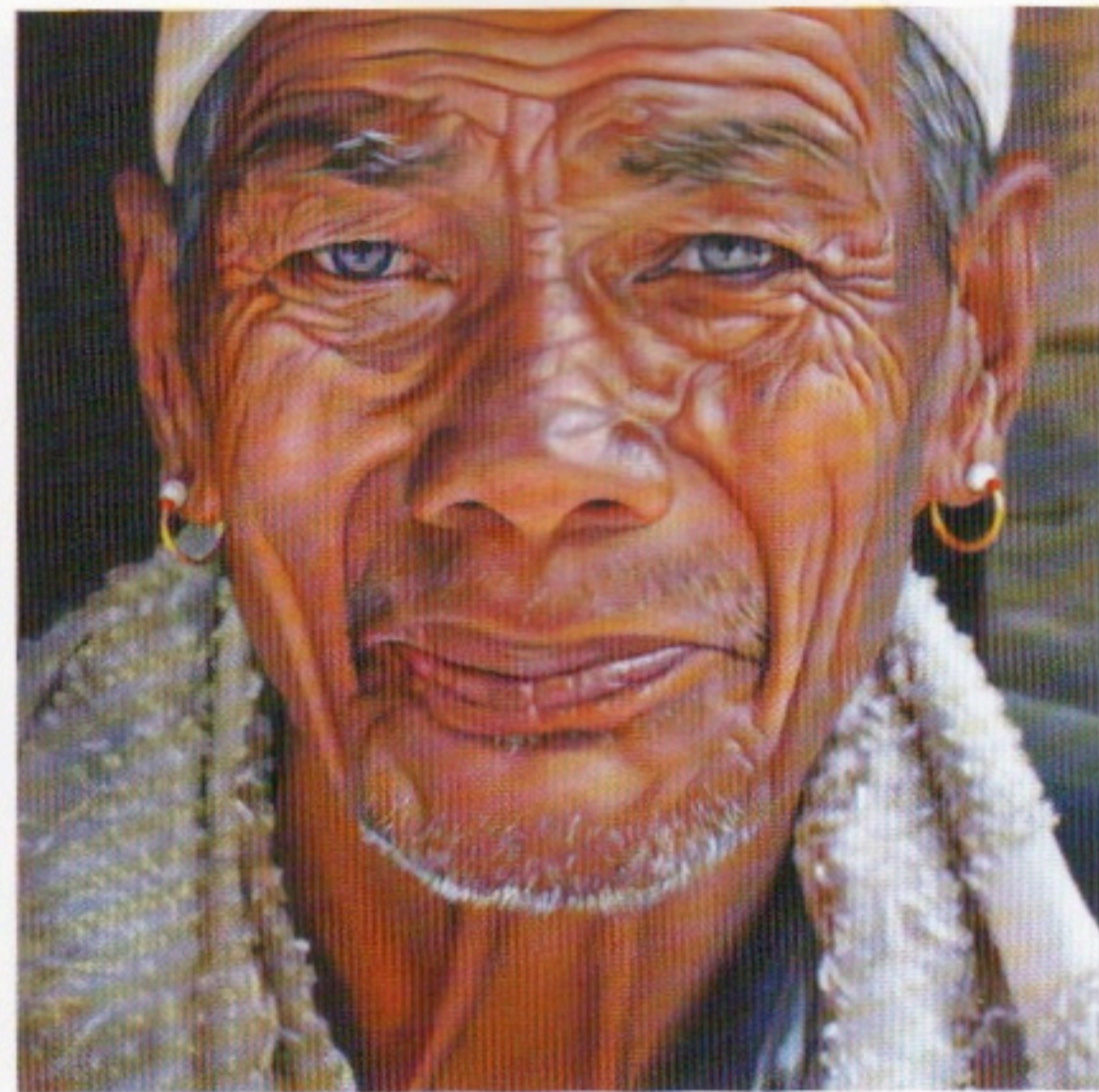
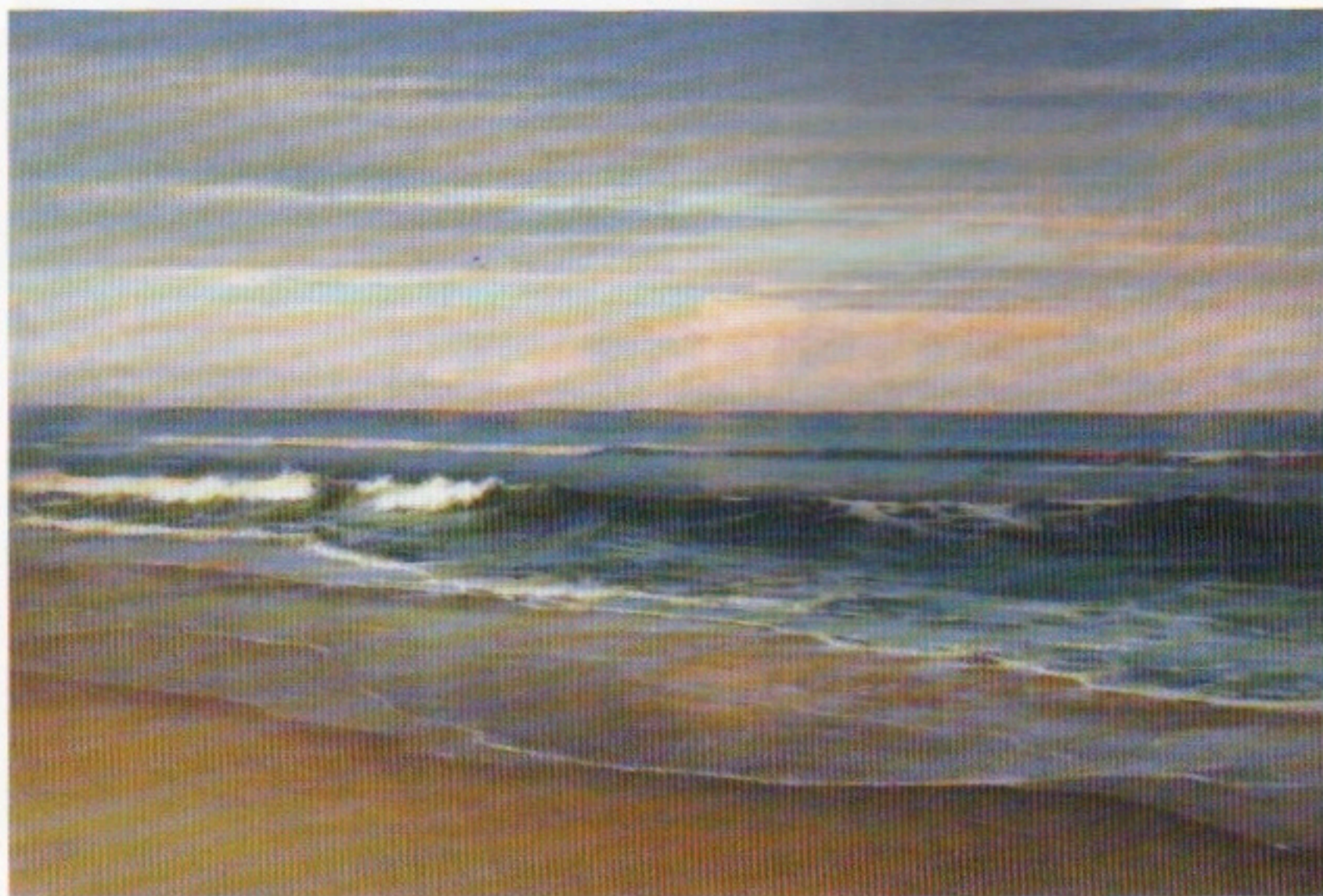
Voted #1 City To Visit by Conde Nast Traveler

### French Quarter Art Galleries CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA



www.FrenchQuarterArts.com

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|---|--|
| 1. Anglin Smith Fine Art<br>9 Queen St., 843-853-0708                               | 15. Hagan Fine Art<br>27 1/2 State St., 843-754-0494                                     |
| 2. Ann Long Fine Art<br>54 Broad St., 843-577-0447                                  | 16. Helena Fox Fine Art<br>106A Church St., 843-723-0073                                 |
| 3. Anne Worsham Richardson<br>Birds I View Gallery<br>119A Church St., 843-723-1276 | 17. Horton Hayes Fine Art<br>30 State St., 843-958-0014                                  |
| 4. Atrium Art Gallery<br>61 Queen St., 843-973-3300                                 | 18. John Carroll Doyle Art Gallery<br>125 Church St., 843-577-7344                       |
| 5. Charleston Artist<br>Guild Gallery<br>160 E. Bay St., 843-722-2425               | 19. The John Dunnan Galleries<br>121 Church St., 843-720-7425                            |
| 6. Coco Vivo Fine Art<br>25 Broad St., 843-720-4027                                 | 20. Lowcountry Artists Ltd.<br>148 E. Bay St., 843-577-9295                              |
| 7. Corrigan Gallery LLC<br>62 Queen St., 843-722-9868                               | 21. Martin Gallery<br>18 Broad St., 843-723-7378   |
| 8. Courtyard Art Gallery<br>149 1/2 E. Bay St., 843-723-9172                        | 22. Mary Martin<br>Gallery of Fine Art<br>103 Broad St., 24 Vendue Range<br>843-723-0303 |
| 9. Dog and Horse Fine Art<br>102 Church St., 843-577-5500                           | 23. Principle Gallery<br>125 Meeting St., 843-727-4500                                   |
| 10. Edward Dare Gallery<br>31 Broad St., 843-853-5002                               | 24. Robert Lange Studios<br>2 Queen St., 843-805-8052                                    |
| 11. Ella Walton Richardson Fine Art<br>58 Broad St., 843-722-3660                   | 25. Robison and Richard Fine Art<br>39 Broad St., 843-637-3289                           |
| 12. Galerie on Broad<br>29 Broad St., 843-410-6332                                  | 26. Spencer Art Galleries I & II<br>55 & 57 Broad St., 843-722-6854                      |
| 13. Gaye Sanders Fisher Gallery<br>124 Church St., 843-958-0010                     | 27. Stewart Fine Art<br>12 State St., 843-853-7100                                       |
| 14. The Gordon Wheeler Gallery<br>180 E. Bay St., 843-722-2546                      | 28. Studio 151 Fine Art Gallery<br>175 Church St., 843-579-9725                          |



Clockwise from top left: Chris Groves, *Release*, oil on linen, 24 x 36 inches; Robert Lange, *Split Second*, oil on panel, 24 x 24 inches; Anthony Ackrill, *Relinquish*, oil on Belgian linen, 26 x 45 inches.

to seven in early 2014. Currently, her artists work in painting and photography. “The artists at the George have a very straightforward connection to early and mid-20th century art movements,” Elkins says. “The work is contemporary, thoughtful, narrative, and much of it is non-representational.” Two of her best-known artists are the abstract painter Paul Yanko and the figurative painter Gary Grier.

Then there’s the **Rebekah Jacob Gallery** on upper King Street, which is setting the gold standard for high-value Southern photography in the region. Owner Rebekah Jacob is a passionate curator who seeks out rare, high-quality works—this past summer, she acquired a dye transfer print of photographer William Eggleston’s “Red Ceiling,” another print of which hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Other photographers Jacob represents include William Christenberry and Kathleen Robbins, and she maintains a small roster of painters and sculptors as well.

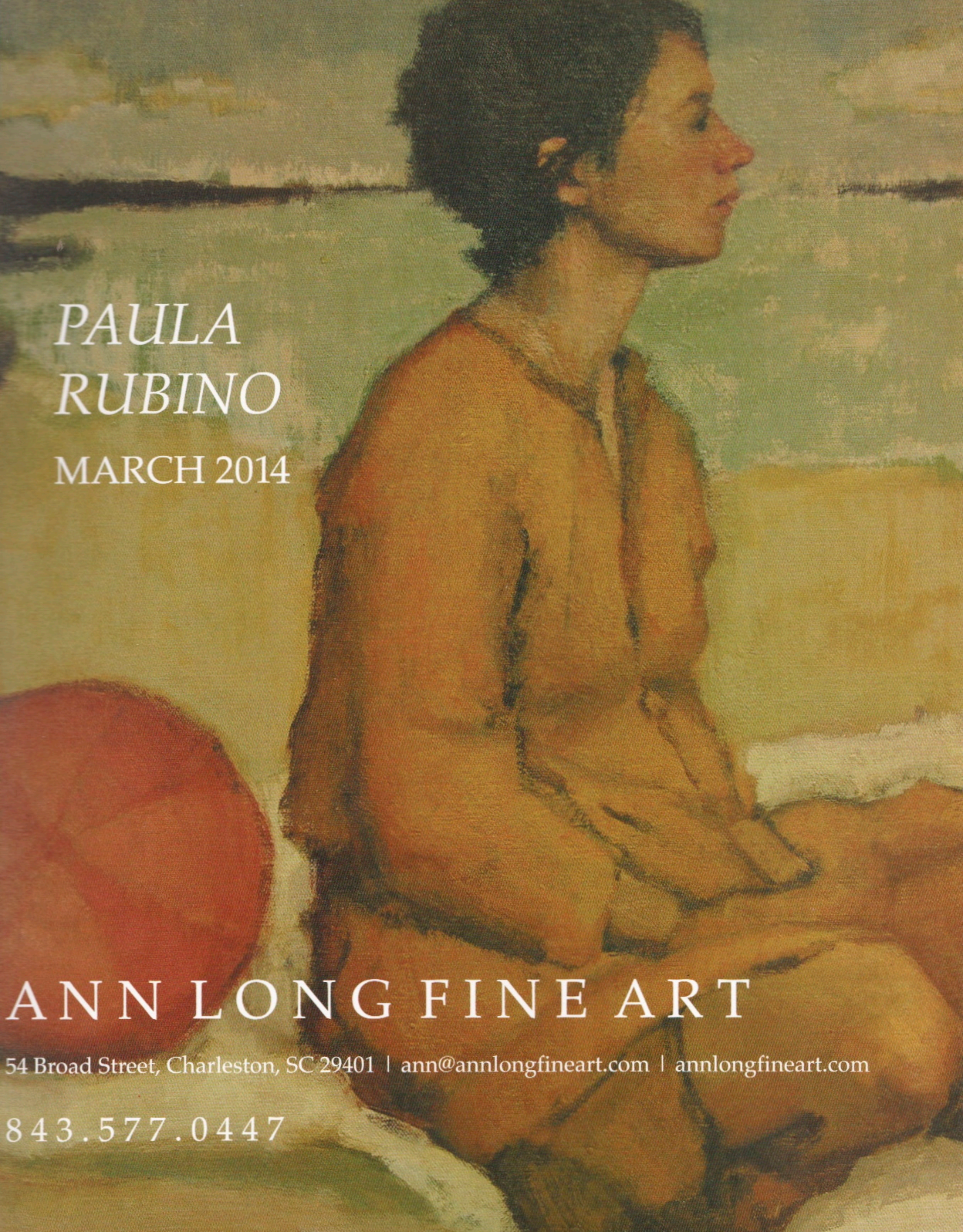
Another photography gallery is **Ben Ham Images**, a new addition to the neighborhood and also located on upper King Street. Ham, a specialist in landscape who is inspired by Ansel Adams, uses a traditional wooden field camera with black and white film to record his views of the Lowcountry and locations as far-flung as the South-

western mesas and the Pacific coast. The photographer’s presence in Charleston represents an expansion from his Hilton Head studio and gallery, from which he has been selling his prints for almost 10 years.

Each March, the Historic Charleston Foundation hosts the **Charleston Antiques Show**, which brings together dealers in American, European, and English antiques and decorative arts from a variety of periods. The show will also host author and editor of *flower* magazine Margot Shaw for a discussion of the use of floral motifs throughout the centuries. The weekend begins with a preview party on March 20 and closes March 23.

Decorative art is a four-generation-spanning passion at **Croghan’s Jewel Box**, a retailer, design studio, and repair shop all in one that occupies a 1790 building on King Street. Right after World War I, William Joseph Croghan, a hand-engraver and jeweler, founded the business, which is maintained today by his granddaughters, Rhett Ramsay Outten and Mariana Ramsay Hay. Croghan’s carries antique jewelry and silver, but they also do their own design; one of Mariana’s daughters has created a “Gold Bug” collection based on the indigenous, ubiquitous palmetto bug. “We’ll take a ring my grandfather made and remake it for the third time,” says Outten. “It’s nice to see the same diamond land in the same family that many times.” For the Croghans, as for many in Charleston, art is in their blood—alive, contemporary, yet always aware of its heritage. ■





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MARCH 2014

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