

Classic and Classy: Art in Charleston

By KELLY COMPTON



Founded in the 17th century with the support of England's King Charles II, the picturesque seaport of Charleston, South Carolina, has long been renowned not only for well-preserved houses, churches, and cobblestone streets, but also for its cultural sophistication. Although it was even more cosmopolitan in the 18th century, when almost every ship trading along the Atlantic coast put in here, Charleston offers art galleries, antique shops, and boutiques well worth exploring. Its inns, bed-and-breakfasts, and cafes are renowned for hospitality and quality, with most an easy stroll from the city's many historical sites.

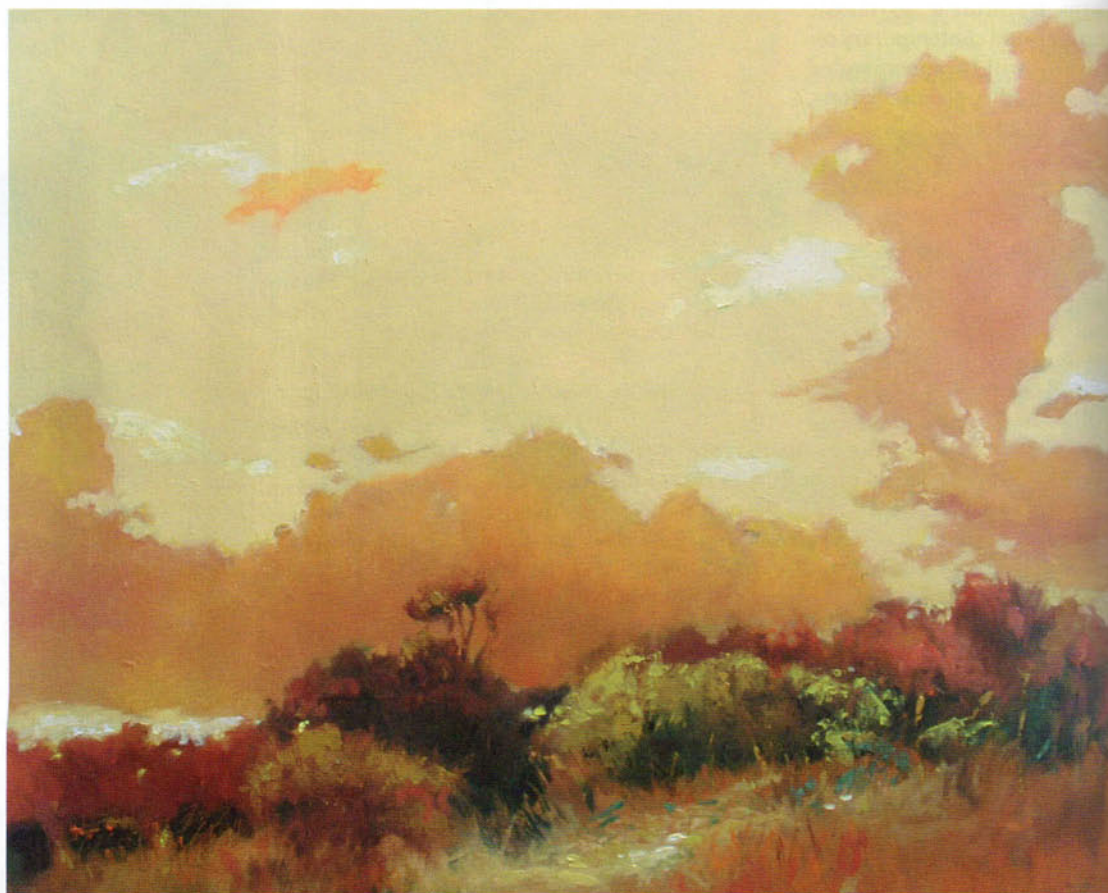
The most prestigious visual arts institution in town is the Gibbes Museum of Art, opened in 1905 and now possessing more than 10,000 works, most with a connection to South Carolina or the South generally. The Gibbes regularly hosts exhibitions organized elsewhere, and now through March 29, two such shows feature blue-chip 20th-century art. *Painters of American Life: The Eight* examines the infamous New York exhibition mounted in 1908 by Arthur B. Davies, William Glackens, Robert Henri, Ernest Lawson, George Luks, Maurice Prendergast, Everett Shinn, and John Sloan. Essentially America's first modernist rebels (set against the stodgy National Academy of Design), *The Eight* introduced an array of new approaches, 50 examples of which are gathered in Charleston this season.

The Gibbes has wisely paired this survey with *The American Scene on Paper: Prints and Drawings from the Schoen Collection*, which carries the story into the 1930s and 1940s. Fifty works acquired by Miami's Jason Schoen reflect that period's various manifestations of realism by such masters as Paul Cadmus, Rockwell Kent, Martin Lewis, Millard Sheets, and John Sloan (again). Every Saturday morning at the Gibbes, visitors can take a 90-minute Art Discovery walking tour that explores the museum galleries and then nearby streets to see where the artists actually created their works. Tickets are \$20 and can be booked ahead via Original Charleston Walks (see the Directory below).

THE GALLERY SCENE

Most of Charleston's art galleries are located in or near the French Quarter; less famous than the New Orleans district of the same name, this was once home to the talented Huguenot community of Protestants who fled Catholic France and contributed significantly to Charleston's prosperity. Although they offer a range of styles and mediums, the galleries here are aesthetically more traditional than the city's best-known cultural project, the *Spoletto Festival USA* mounted annually since 1977. (Tickets go on sale January 4 for the 2009 performances, which run May 22-June 7.)

Particularly noteworthy among the galleries is **Ann Long Fine Art**, which represents the classical realist masters Charles Cecil, Daniel Graves, Ben Long, and D. Jeffrey Mims, as well as younger realists



MADELINE DUKES (b. 1962)

EVENING SKY

2007, OIL ON CANVAS, 16 x 20 IN.

PRIVATE COLLECTION, COURTESY EDWARD DARE GALLERY



MARY WHYTE (B. 1953)
GOLDENROD
 2003, WATERCOLOR ON PAPER, 15 1/2 x 20 1/2 IN.
 \$25,000 AT COLEMAN FINE ART

like Kamille Corry, Mario Robinson, and Paula Rubino (whose next solo show opens in March). Long also handles superb sculptures by Lotta Blokker and Robert Bodem, as well as the estate of the German Expressionist Otto Neumann (1895-1975). At **Carolina Galleries**, visitors find considerable depth in “Charleston Renaissance” artists of the 1920s, when the city’s African American community enjoyed a creative boom comparable to Harlem’s. Among the figures from this period are Alfred Hutty and Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, though Carolina also handles such contemporary talents as Stephen Scott Young and Evan Wilson.

champions such talented painters as Kenn Backhaus, Donald Demers, Billyo O’Donnell, and Edward Rice, and the gifted sculptor Kent Ullberg.

At **Horton Hayes Fine Art**, visitors will find impressive landscapes by Mark Kelvin Horton and Chris Groves, and fine watercolors by Earl B. Lewis and Kim Weiland at **Wells Gallery**. **Smith Killian Fine Art** offers the sparkling canvases of Kim English and Shannon Smith, the observant animal sculptures of Darrell Davis, and the black-and-white photographs of Tripp Smith, who deftly captures the flat, swampy “Lowcountry” along the coast near Charleston. An array of outstanding artworks are at **The Sylvan Gallery**, including Glenna

Coleman Fine Art focuses on the living artists Mary Whyte, Joseph Paquet, John Cosby, Marc R. Hanson, and George Strickland, while **Edward Dare Gallery** handles a wide range of artforms, including the spectacular landscapes of South Carolina native Madeline Dukes. **Ella Walton Richardson Fine Art Gallery** features such painters as Lindsay Goodwin, Aleksander and Lyuba Titovets, Karen Hewitt Hagan, and Hilarie Lambert, as well as a unique concentration of modern Dutch masters like Frans van der Waal. Although **Hatfield 2 Fine Art** carries impressive scenes of local natural beauty painted by Margaret Peery and Ed Cooper, even better known are those made by West Fraser, who is represented by his wife **Helena Fox** at her eponymous gallery. Fox also

Goodacre’s renowned sculptures, landscapes by Nancy Bush, Trey Finney, Walt Gonske, Karol Mack, and Joseph Orr, and figure paintings by Scott Burdick, Susan Lyon, and Steve and Dan Gerhartz.

As usual, several galleries in Charleston have particular specializations. Most intriguing is **Gallery Chuma**, which features colorful artworks reflecting the Gullah culture that arose in the 19th century when African Americans settled in the isolated islands and marshlands stretching from Jacksonville, Florida, north to Wilmington, North Carolina. **Kensington Stobart Gallery** focuses on John Stobart’s superb maritime scenes, while **Dog & Horse Fine Art** has everything for devotees of the hunt, including works by Joseph Sulkowski and Beth Evans.



KENN BACKHAUS (B. 1951)
PALMETTOS
 2007, OIL ON LINEN, 16 x 20 IN.
 HELENA FOX FINE ART



Directory of Resources (in alphabetical order)

Unless noted otherwise, all listings are in Charleston, SC, with zip code 29401 and area code 843.

- **Allison Sprock Fine Art**, 179 1/2 King Street, 577.3636, allisonsprockfineart.com
- **Ann Long Fine Art**, 54 Broad Street, 577.0447, annlongfineart.com
- **Audubon Gallery**, 190 King Street, 853.1100, audubonart.com
- **Birds I View Gallery**, 119A Church Street, 723.1276, anneworshamrichardson.com
- **Carolina Galleries Fine Art**, 106A Church Street, 720.8622, carolinagalleries.com
- **Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau**, 423 King Street, 29403, 853.8000, charlestoncvb.com
- **Charleston Art & Antiques Forum**, charlestonantiquesforum.org
- **Charleston Fine Art Dealers' Association**, PO Box 942, 29402, 723.0073, cfada.com
- **Charleston Renaissance Gallery**, 103 Church Street, 723.0025, fineartsouth.com
- **City Gallery**, Waterfront Park, 32-34 Prioleau Street, 958.6484, charlestoncity.info
- **Coco Vivo**, 25 Broad Street, 720.4027, coastandcottage.com
- **Coleman Fine Art**, 79 Church Street, 853.7000, colemanfineart.com
- **Corrigan Gallery**, 62 Queen Street, 722.9868, corrigan-gallery.com
- **Courtyard Art Gallery**, 149 1/2 East Bay Street, 723.9172, courtyardartgallery.com
- **Dobbin Gallery**, 175 Church Street, 579.9725, dobbing-gallery.com
- **Dog & Horse Fine Art & Portraiture**, 106B Church Street, 577.5500, dogartdealer.com
- **John Carroll Doyle Art Gallery**, 125 Church Street, 577.7344, johncdoyle.com
- **Edward Dare Gallery**, 31 Broad Street, 853.5002, edwarddare.com
- **Ella Walton Richardson Fine Art Gallery**, 58 Broad Street, 722.3660, ellarichardson.com
- **Eva Carter Gallery**, 132 East Bay Street, 722.0506, evacartergallery.com
- **Eye Level Art**, 50 Queen Street, 278.2374, eyelevelart.com
- **French Quarter Gallery Association**, PO Box 918, 29402, 577.7101, frenchquarterarts.com
- **Gallery Chuma**, 43 John Street, 722.7568, gallerychuma.com
- **Gaye Sanders Fisher Gallery**, 124 Church Street, 958.0010, gayesandersfisher.com
- **Gibbes Museum of Art**, 135 Meeting Street, 722.2706, gibbesmuseum.org
- **Hatfield 2 Fine Art**, 38 Queen Street, 577.7710, hatfield2fineart.com
- **Helena Fox Fine Art**, 12 Queen Street, 723.0073, helenafoxfineart.com
- **Historic Charleston Foundation**, 40 East Bay Street, 723.1623, historiccharleston.org
- **Horton Hayes Fine Art**, 30 State Street, 958.0014, hortonhayes.com
- **Kensington Stobart Gallery**, 165 King Street, 937.8560, kensingtonstobart.com
- **Lowcountry Artists, Ltd.**, 148 East Bay Street, 577.9295, lowcountryartists.com
- **Martin Gallery**, 18 Broad Street, 723.7378, martingallerycharleston.com
- **Original Charleston Walks**, 800.729.3480, charlestonwalks.com
- **Robert Lange Studios**, 151 East Bay Street, 805.8052, robertlangestudios.com
- **Smith Killian Fine Art**, 9 Queen Street, 853.0708, smithkillian.com
- **Spencer Art Galleries I and II**, 55 and 57 Broad Street, 722.6854, spencerartgallery.com
- **Sylvan Gallery**, 171 King Street, 722.2172, thesylvangallery.com
- **Waterfront Art Gallery**, 215 East Bay Street, 722.1155, waterfrontartgallery.com
- **Wells Gallery**, 125 Meeting Street, 853.3233, wells-gallery.com

A LIVELY CALENDAR

Charleston's galleries work together often to engage locals and visitors. For example, the Charleston Fine Art Dealers' Association (CFADA) will again organize the *Palette and Palate Stroll* on the evening of July 17, when galleries open their doors and offer gourmet cuisine prepared by local chefs. Still more elaborate is CFADA's *Fine Art Annual*: Next November 6-7, a whirl of open houses will converge with an upscale art auction and competitions for plein-airists and high-school students. In addition, the French Quarter Gallery Association coordinates art walks on the first Friday evenings of March, April, May, June, October, and December, allowing more opportunities to explore galleries after regular hours.

Coming up in mid-March is a wave of activities that kicks off the month-long *Festival of Houses and Gardens*, during which more than 150 private homes in Charleston's oldest neighborhoods open their doors to visitors. Also on deck is the *Charleston International Antiques Show* featuring more than 30 dealers, as well as the *Gibbes's Art & Antiques Forum*, a series of lectures by experts addressing the theme "Town and Country: Life in Early America."

Whenever you visit Charleston, there is bound to be a cultural happening on the docket. Just be sure to leave enough time to wander the city's atmospheric streets and shoreline: Losing track of time is a key reason to visit this seemingly timeless place. ■

KELLY COMPTON is a contributing writer to *Fine Art Connoisseur*.

BEN LONG (B. 1945)

Portrait of Michael Smith

2008, Oil on panel, 32 x 44 in.

Ann Long Fine Art, Charleston



OUT AND ABOUT

Charleston's Ann Long Fine Art hosted a lively patrons preview for the exhibition *Maestros*. The November event highlighted the work of four classical realists who have dedicated most of their careers to teaching the next generation how to paint well: Charles Cecil, Daniel Graves, Ben Long, and Jeffrey Mims.



CHARLES CECIL, DANIEL GRAVES, JEFFREY MIMS, BEN LONG