



"Madeleine in Profile" oil on canvas, 18 x 24, 2004

art and the city

BY JIM MAGNER

A Capitol Hill artist and writer, Jim can be reached at arttandtheCity05@aol.com

Artist Profile sarah griffin thibodeaux

To Sarah Griffin Thibodeaux, a portrait is an act of respect – a statement of admiration. She looks into you, your beauty, with awe; it's the beauty of character and spirit that underlies your physical appearance. Interaction with you is important. It allows her to capture a quality from the exchanges – a composite of the life you bring to the sitting through your expressions and energy. She wants you to be happy with the finished work, not just with likeness, but the sense of who you are—how you carry yourself and how you occupy space.

Sarah began drawing and painting in high school and has juggled painting and journalism throughout her life. She has lived and studied in New Orleans, Manhattan and now Washington. Most of her work is through commissioned portraits, but she is also in love with landscapes and still lifes. She has begun a series of tree portraits in and around New Orleans – the survivors – and the new growth that's fighting to restore nature to what it was. She is also starting a series of Mississippi River paintings with the scars and reminders of a great storm.

But not all portraits are of isolated faces and places. Sarah's inspiration comes from deep inside – a love of the bayous and marshes where she grew up. It is also a love of the people who fished, danced and laughed in Cajun Country. Or blew jazz so pure and sweet that the streets of New Orleans couldn't contain it, and it flowed out into the soul of a nation. Or the



plain folk who hunted in the piney woods near the Texas border or farmed in the low lands along the great river. Sarah Griffin Thibodeaux is on Capitol Hill now and likes it, but it is Louisiana that owns her. Her painting will pull her back there before long – to its troubles and triumphs.

For a closer look see www.sarahgriffinthibodeaux.com or contact Sarah at sarah@studiothibodeaux.com.

Jim Magner's Thoughts on Art

You're complicated. You're not what you look like, or what you think you look like. Your appearance goes deeper than the image in the mirror. Even if you are just a few days old, you have experiences that begin to give you depth and character. If you are more than a couple of years, you have stuff floating around in your head that few people would guess ... your likes, new ideas and hesitations about what you have been told. By the time you are several decades, you are impossibly complex.

There may be several of you behind that carefully engineered face – that public person. They are the personas with private agitations, repressed creativity, beaten-down impulses, trimmed ambitions and the sweaty-underarm fears that stay hidden in the shadows of your façade. But there are also joys and dreams and fun surprises held in reserve – dying to break loose upon the world.

You know what I'm talking about ... a camera can't find your other persons. Of course, if you are a grand statesman or a social swell you probably prefer it that way. But sit down in front of a portrait painter and the real you has a chance of being seen ... if ... the painter has a better eye than a lens and isn't a slave to "likeness," that bugaboo of art. If the interactions begin to crackle and flow, if the painter and poser both release their inner dreamers and demons, then a timeless portrait, and marvelous art, can happen. But it's not for the chicken-hearted.

At the Galleries

"Double Vision", Touchstone Gallery

406 Seventh St. NW Second Floor, Jan. 9–Feb. 3

This is one-stop viewing and maybe late-Christmas shopping. Sixty local artists will be exhibiting in one space – Touchstone Gallery's big room. It's called "double vision" because each Touchstone member is inviting one artist friend to also show a piece. It makes a fascinating mix of subjects, styles, media and personalities. Opening reception: Jan. 11, 6-8:30 p.m. 202-347-2787, www.touchstonegallery.com.

"Night and Day", Capitol Hill Arts League/Workshop

545 Seventh St. SE, Jan. 12–Feb. 1

"Night and Day" is the first themed art show of the new year. Juried by Mark Power, CHAL is known for exhibits that are open to all artists of the Washington region. You get a good selection of art at very reasonable prices. It opens with a reception Jan. 12, 5-7 p.m. Earlier in the day, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., CHAW will host its annual open house to showcase a great variety of winter/spring classes and workshops: drawing, dance, photography, music, yoga, etc., for both children and adults. There will be class demonstrations by the instructors at the open house. Also, at 4 p.m., Bruce McKraig, chairman of the photography department, will present a lecture on photography, questioning photography's "capacity to be a perfect transcript." 202-547-6839, www.chaw.org.

National Student Art Exhibit, US Department of Education

400 Maryland Ave. SW, Jan. 14 thru February

The US Department of Education and the National PTA will open a new student art exhibit of award-winning works from the PTA's 2007 Reflections Program Jan. 14 at 11 a.m. This will be the best time to see this fun and significant show. The PTA receives over 700,000 entries each year from students in preschool through grade 12, which are judged at the local, state and national levels. These are the award winners. To attend the opening or to visit the exhibit through February, the public must RSVP by contacting marilyn.joynner@ed.gov.

"Chasing Tales", Project 4

903 U St. NW, To Jan 19

Eight artists have been chosen to give their personal insights into how narratives, societal myths and fantasies have shaped religion, literature, games and entertainment in Western culture. They explore the history from which they, and we, derive through photography, video and traditional painting technique ... and they come at it with deliciously vicious humor and some genuine insights. 202-232-4340, www.project4gallery.com.

"Optima", Carroll Square Gallery

975 F St. NW, To Feb. 22

This is the "First Annual Optima Exhibit" featuring five artists working in different ways toward a common theme: "You Catch More Flies with Honey..." 202-624-8649, www.carrollsquare.com/gallery.htm.

Jill Banks, The Art League

105 North Union St. Alexandria, Va., Jan. 9-30

Jill Banks' solo exhibit, "Place Settings" is about moods and emotions ... and the atmospheres that people choose to live out various moments in various stages of their lives. She incorporates landscape, interior, still life, portrait painting and drawing to define the personalities of the people and places that play either major or tangential roles in our lives, or none at all, but who all matter in the larger view. Opening reception, Jan. 13, 2-4 p.m. 703-683-1780, www.theartleague.org. ■

