

PROFILE - Celebrating the beauty of our environment with art

... and loving her time in
Boca Grande

Janice Moore

BY JACK SHORT

If you happen to wander into Hughes Gallery after the 31st of March you'll be treated to some of Janice L. Moore's artwork. Her paintings are colorful, whether bright, like her recent work, or saturated with deeper hues, they are soft, pensive depictions of landscapes and buildings.

She is the daughter of Donna Moore, a partner at Sotheby's on the island. She and her brother, Jeff, both tell the same story about finding Boca Grande in 1973 - he asked a local fisherman where to find the best fishing, and of course the answer was, "Boca Grande." Her family had sold their transportation company in Maine when Janice was still in high school. They spent part of the year living here on the boat. Donna, whose family is from Nova Scotia, built a house here in 1984. Though Janice still lives in Maine, she and her son, Joseph, come to Boca Grande occasionally, "to reset."

Janice developed her conviction about art early.

"When I was six," she said, "I told my mother I was going to live in New York and be an artist."

She studied art at Sarah Lawrence, which included a year in France among the brightly colored poppies, rolling hills and blue skies. For someone who describes herself as "light obsessed," she couldn't have found a better place.

"I was in heaven," she said.

Her art isn't limited to landscapes, though. Janice said she's been working with commercial and industrial structures recently, such as a dairy factory or an old burger joint. She explained that she tries to find something beautiful in them, and to take a chronological slice that can be preserved. That feeling of control, the ability to carve a small niche out of the world where she can escape, is important to her, she said.

"When I have a canvas," she explained, "I get to decide everything. There's a place I can go where I actually do get to decide how it goes. If something's not right, I can fix it."

If it seems like that need might have been inspired by some uncertainty or instability, it may be because she's



Janice L. Moore

been living with multiple sclerosis for almost 20 years. The unpredictable disease, which affects the nervous system, manifests itself in different ways. Janice said her energy, feeling in her hands and feet, even her sight, are affected at times.

She once lost her sight for an extended period.

When she regained it, she had the opportunity to reexamine what was important, to think about what she saw in a new way. Janice said it almost doesn't matter what the subject is: it is the subject's luminosity, "what makes a painting glow," that matters to her and her patrons, who say her works are a source of light. They are preservations of a feeling or event for her, too. In her home in Maine she can still feel the warmth of the gloaming after 4 p.m., when February has already extinguished the daylight.

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Janice is grateful for her perspective and, feels that M.S. has been, in some ways, an inspiration, a force that drives her to see what's around her and work hard without worrying about anything else.

"If I have the energy, I'm in the studio," she said. "The studio is my sanctuary and I feel incredibly lucky, though I've had some major bumps on the road."

One of her first jobs was at Daniel Wolf's art gallery on 57th Street in New York. It focused on investment and corporate art, and premium fine art photography, according to Janice. At that time, she thought she might have a career in photography, but decided on painting instead.

"I am not a technical person," she explained, "as it became more and more technical I became more frustrated. I can say what I need to say with a paint brush more quickly and directly."

Shortly after she graduated her brother, Jeff, got her a job, "to pay the rent," where he worked as a model. She was essentially a talent scout for male models.

As much fun as that might have been, she didn't find New York the fertile field of inspiration many do. Rather, she found herself "living to pay the rent."

"What made me want to paint was sky and water and light," Janice said. "In New York you always had an apartment that didn't get any light."

She explained again, that she was



A painting by Janice.

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light obsessed from living in northern Maine and from living on a boat.

Because of her work with the modeling agency, she was able to travel throughout Europe. She has also traveled around the United States and Nova Scotia, where Donna's family came from. After 10 years in New York living and working as a talent scout and an artist, she moved to Boca Grande in 1995, when Donna was building her practice.

Janice welcomed the chance to be with her mom. She said she is inspired by her mother's kindness and warmth, and that Donna will always be a role model.

"She does what she does with such grace, and integrity," she explained. "She is inherently ethical, which I greatly admire in anyone, but especially in her."

She stayed in Boca Grande for a few winters before moving to Maine,

returning to Boca Grande on occasion.

Here, she found inspiration in the Kozy Kitchen and houses at the south end of the island, perhaps sensing that they might be replaced or changed. As Janice put it, the chance to arrest the changes appealed to her.

She had her first art show here in 1996; some of the patrons she acquired during that show have stayed with her.

Even in times when people weren't buying art, she found a way to remain positive. Janice said it gave her a chance to explore less "collectible" ideas.

The greatest compliment she receives, she said, is someone who buys a second work from her. As she puts it, they have lived with it, it makes them happy and they want more.

What could be more encouraging?

Joseph has taken up the pencil and

brush as well, and proudly shows off a depiction of some unnamed skirmish. It is detailed and expansive, reminiscent of Philippoteaux's "The Battle of Gettysburg," if it had been drawn by an 11-year-old.

"He obsessively draws battle scenes," she smiled.

He is a bright, soft-spoken young man, but he can also be relied upon for pointed, even blunt critiques. In return, Janice gives blunt advice about being an artist.

"If you're doing it because you want to be famous," she said, "you're going to be disappointed."

Though she and Joseph both love art, their favorite shared activity is reading, she said.

"It's probably our most sacred activity and I will do it until he doesn't let me anymore," she explained.

A mentor once told her to figure out what she's trying to say, and to know whether or not it's been said before. Her work makes it clear she's answered that question with a uniquely grateful perspective about the beauty of her surroundings, as seen by someone for whom the ability itself is the gift.

"We see so much that we stop seeing," she said.

Janice said she gets the privilege of stopping and thinking about what makes up her surroundings.

Her show opens at the Hughes Gallery on March 31, from 7 to 9 p.m., and will showcase a mixture of her Boca Grande paintings, along with some from other travels.