

# City of Charleston, SC

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photography. He spent years photographing golf landscapes, architecture, and interiors, for both resort and lifestyle publications.

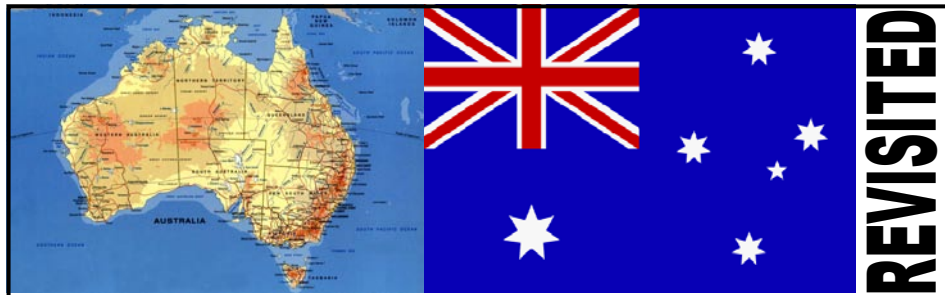
Commercial work is Soliday's livelihood, but he always tries to imbue his images with a certain authenticity and narrative. His attention to rice related work began almost immediately upon moving to South Carolina. That phase was active for about a decade, then became dormant for many years. Upon resuming his study of the rice culture in 2007, he also returned to photographing the rice landscape.

Soliday considers the City Gallery at Waterfront Park exhibition a launching point for the pursuit of his long held dream of creating a companion portfolio of West African rice fields. Another new project of Soliday's involves aerial landscapes of hand-dug antebellum drainage systems and transport

canals. His hope is to ultimately convert his extensive writings and documentation of the rice culture into published materials.

The City Gallery at Waterfront Park, owned by the City of Charleston and operated by the City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs, presents an annual program of exhibitions and events featuring the finest contemporary art from local, regional, national and international artists, stimulating discussion and dialogue among audiences. The City Gallery provides access to the visual arts for everyone in Charleston, SC, visitors and residents alike, by offering exhibits that are all admission-free. The City Gallery is located on Pringleau Street in downtown Charleston.

For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings or visit ([www.citygalleryatwaterfrontpark.com](http://www.citygalleryatwaterfrontpark.com)).



## A Few Words From Down Under

**Editor's Note:** Judith McGrath contributed her writings about exhibits and events taking place in Western Australia to *Carolina Arts* for about a decade. Although she was writing about events taking place thousands and thousands of miles away, they seemed relevant to what was going on here in the Carolinas. Her contributions were very popular when we first ran them and continue to be popular on our website's archives. We've decided to revisit them from time to time.

### A Few Words From Down Under on Reviewing the Critics

by Judith McGrath, first run in our November Issue 2007

Spare a thought for the poor art critic. All we hear is moaning and wailing from artists and galleries about the dearth of art criticism. Yet, when someone dares to write an honest critique of an exhibition, be it praising or denigrating, those same complainants 'chuck a wobbly'. (Australian for 'throwing a tantrum') This leaves the critic stuck between a rock and a hard place, either condemned for being prejudicial or dismissed as lacking knowledge and/or understanding of the newest inspirational art.

With that in mind you'll understand why I classify myself a Reviewer rather than Critic. No, it's not to protect me from the slings and arrows of irate readers it's more the case of correctly defining what I do. As a 'reviewer' I need only record my reaction to, and interpretation of, the art on exhibition. If the work is good it should be explained why; if it's imperfect but shows promise 'corrective' criticism can be offered; if it's bad ignore it. (As they say, there's no such thing as bad publicity!) It's about helping the artist and the viewer, it's not about ego.

For example, I recently attended an exhibition of new sculptures by a respected ceramic artist in this town. It had been years since she'd presented her work at home as she'd been exhibiting and participating in workshops around the world. She creates androgynous figures with exaggerated proportions to suggest the uniqueness of humanity.

Recalling her first show many years back I could see the thread that linked these new efforts to her primary forms and how her style had evolved within her theme. It was also obvious that, like me, just about every other viewer in the gallery could pin a personal narrative to at least one figure. People were discussing the works with other attendees, whether they were acquainted or not. One woman

approached me to relate what she read in one form and wondered if I felt the same. We were joined by a gentleman and each delighted in the other's reading of the work. The exhibition was a wonderful experience and I reviewed it accordingly.

The following weekend the Sunday newspaper's relatively new art critic wrote about the same show. He considered the figures deformed, the designs etched into the white slip on some forms too busy, the flattened busts derivative of Modigliani then compared the artist's efforts in clay to another more celebrated local practitioner, who works in bronze! It was blatantly obvious that all he saw were odd figures, not the universal truths they presented.

Most art 'critics' view an exhibition through eyes clouded by what they know. They see all that's gone before - in art history, in the artist's career, in the local scene - but not what's in front of their eyes. They feel it is their responsibility to place the artwork within a socio-political environment believing their academic credence allows them to fix the boundaries of the art scene. On the other hand, art 'reviewers' leave the backpack full of local prejudices or academic references at home. Instead of analyzing the work with reference to politics, history, culture, personalities or whatever, they look at the work to see what it is saying and relate to it in a personal manner. Yes, our response to fine art is enhanced by knowledge, however it should not be swayed by concepts that lay beyond the artwork, or the self.

As an art reviewer I try to see what the artist is saying, in relation to life and/or art. When attending an exhibition my overall response to the whole is noted prior to recording my interpretation of particular works. Sometimes I'll chat with, or listen to the comments by other visitors in the gallery to glean their reactions to the exhibition as visual art communicates on different levels to different viewers.

I recall one show by a respected artist in this town and how, after going through the exhibition jotting down my responses, I tuned into the comments of a brace of ladies perusing the paintings. I heard oos and ahs as they approached each exhibit, and how they were students of the artist some years back. As they viewed the work they chatted about the artist's good looks, his teaching methods and how much they enjoyed art school. They never once discussed the object in front of them in the present instead they reminisced about the past and considered where to have lunch in the immediate future.

There was another woman in the gal-

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## Cooperative Gallery Featuring Lowcountry Artists



Dan Diehl



Janice Cramer



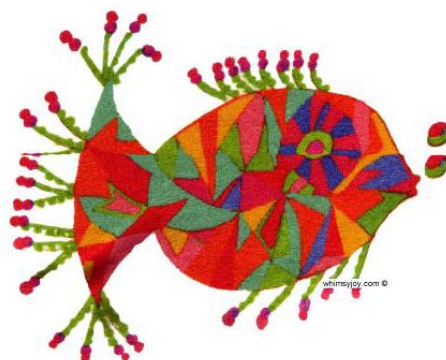
Anne John

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