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## **Houma native and New York artist makes his Louisiana debut**

By: Michael F. Vinning

You can see Brooks Frederick's work through March 31 at the Issa Contemporary Fine Arts Galleria.



The Issa Galleria in downtown Houma is proud to present the work of Houma native Brooks Frederick through March 31. The Issa Contemporary Fine Arts Galleria is the only one like it in the bayou region and owner Carmen Abou-Issa believes her gallery is laying the groundwork for the future of fine art in Houma.

"My dream has always been to open my own art gallery, I just never thought it would be in Houma, Louisiana," Abou-Issa said. "My husband transferred to Houma in 1996, and I didn't expect to be in south Louisiana very long, but before I knew it I had two children, a dog and gray hair."

She said once the kids were of school age she asked herself this question, "Now what am I going to do with my life?" As fate would have it, the Houma area was in the midst of an economic explosion, and with her husband's medical practice doing well, Abou-Issa went right to work finding the perfect location for her soon-to-be art gallery.

"The rest, as they say, is history," Abou-Issa stated.

The Issa Galleria currently displays art concentrated in the following areas: sculptures/ceramics, metal sculptures, photography, paintings (on both canvas and paper), prints and video art.

"I love them all," Abou-Issa replied when asked which form was her favorite.

The gallery displays the art of 11 staff artists (some local) and one visiting artist, Houma native and resident of Brooklyn, N.Y., Brooks Frederick.

His current body of work, mostly completed in the last year, reflects the artist's, "interest of the changing landscapes of the two places he calls home, New York City and south Louisiana," Frederick said.

Of all the artists at the Issa Galleria, Frederick is the only "realist" painter featured. Abou-Issa describes his work as having a basis in realism with hints of impressionism.

When asked to describe Frederick, Abou-Issa said, "He is calm, mellow, and easygoing and tends to be a bit shy when talking about his work. Usually I encounter two kinds of artists, ones who are humble and gifted and others with huge egos and not enough talent to back it up." Abou-Issa said.

Frederick is excited to see what people will think of his work, especially the pieces on New Orleans (pre- and post-Hurricane Katrina) and other parts of Louisiana. Cocodrie has been a point of inspiration for Frederick; his piece entitled 'Cocodrie Morning' is a "record of a rapidly changing landscape; some changes natural, others man made. It is a place that may not always be," Frederick said.

He is concerned about and inspired by environmental issues in Louisiana and Frederick admits this is the first time he has been inspired by the political arena.

Frederick uses knowledge of traditional history painting to show contemporary-life-inspired paintings. He was and is still inspired by the works of artists such as Rembrandt, Picasso, Van Gogh, Monet, renaissance artists like Michelangelo, and most currently by James Abbot McNeil Whistler, who is known for his ethereal, somewhat mysterious landscapes.

"He (Whistler) had a real powerful and emotional, formal statement in his art, one that persists in the memory as being timeless," Frederick said.

Frederick also noted that Whistler painted many of his landscapes from memory, a technique Frederick has grown to use being a New York-based artist painting Louisiana landscapes and swamp scenes.

"When I do paintings from memory they have this emotional quality that stems from me trying to breakdown what it is I am feeling and the details play more of a background role," Frederick said.

Frederick moved to Houma at 2-years-old with his family; his father, Larry Frederick, was employed in the oilfield industry then, but is currently the president of the Regional Arts Council in Houma.

"I remember my mom putting a set of crayons and brushes in my hand when we settled in, and I haven't put them down since," said Frederick when asked at what age he developed his passion for drawing. He would later attend McNeese State University in Lake Charles and the New York Academy of Fine Arts. Frederick now teaches and paints at Adelphi University in Long Island, in addition to teaching privately, but travels to Louisiana often.

Frederick said he uses the same techniques learned at McNeese under artist and mentor Dottie Billiu Henschel to teach his students, both publically and privately. Billiu Henschel was the wife of painter Henry Henschel, a resident of Gray.

Frederick is excited about coming back to Houma and especially about having a venue to display his work; he thinks the area was long overdue for a fine-arts gallery.

"I've tried to keep the show about real issues, things that affect daily living in south Louisiana, both politically and environmentally; I've tried to do this in an aesthetically pleasing way," said Frederick when asked what people could expect from his show.

His series on Katrina-ravaged New Orleans are powerful and emotional, showing both the tragedy and hope of the situation. Frederick uses a dark-color scheme that provides a sense of foreboding while unifying the series with the common theme of people helping people.

Frederick's work is on display through March 31. You can meet the artist at a wine and cheese reception from 6 to 8 p.m. March 29 at the Issa Galleria, 306 Goode St., downtown Houma. The show is free and open to the public.

"There is something for everyone here to enjoy," Abou-Issa said.

For more information on Frederick's show or the Issa Galleria, call the gallery at 655-1818 or email [info@issagalleria.com](mailto:info@issagalleria.com).

The gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays-Fridays and by appointment on the weekends by calling 991-7343.



Brooks Frederick

The gallery showcases works from mid-career, established to promising, emerging artists from regional, national and international markets. Issa Galleria also is available for private engagements such as business meetings/banquets and birthday parties.

"The gallery setting offers an atmosphere of class and culture to any event," Abou-Issa said.

To view a wide variety of art in many concentrations, including a sample of works by Brooks Frederick, visit the gallery online at [www.Issagalleria.com](http://www.Issagalleria.com).

The gallery will display art for the upcoming Art After Dark show from 5 to 8 p.m. April 12.

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