

Studio Visit continued...

continued from Page 9

bicycle at the entryway and a spacious backyard.

Sue welcomes me in wearing her own artwork: handpainted dangly earrings and a silver starfish hanging on a delicate chain around her neck. She is a living model for her creativity! Compact and endlessly energetic, Sue shows me around. Charming and bright, the floorplan is an open concept living and kitchen area with art on every wall and nook. It already seems an artist's

haven. There is her own art, which she rotates through the home on its way to one of the local galleries, and the art of friends who inspire her. One especially intriguing piece by a friend looks like a precise painting of a water scene, complete with a wading bird and dragonfly – upon closer inspection it is a collage with intricate cut out pieces of paper, layer upon layer. This artist is one of Sue's inspirations for her own multi-media pieces.



Moving through the home we reach a big beautiful lanai with floor to ceiling windows looking out to a grassy expanse and tree line. Wonderful sunlight pours in, herb and pepper plants abound. The area serves as a lovely place to paint – the feeling of being outdoors but sheltered from the weather.

Finally we make it to Sue's actual studio, designated for and filled to the brim with art supplies. Oh my, it is an artist's dream! Tiny but very organized with peg boards that line two of the walls. These hold all sorts of tools including palette knives, spray

bottles, shears and a blow dryer. There are open shelves holding every type of acrylic paint and medium. Jars and cans of dozens of brushes are in easy reach on a large desk type work table. Canvases and boards and boxes of paper are stacked along every square inch of space.

Looking at this cluttered but organized chaos I quickly realize Sue has a passion for learning techniques and is always experimenting with mediums and new types of art. Even so, she has a distinct style that is

continued above on next column to the right



instantly recognizable as hers. Very cheerful florals and landscapes, whether painted or collage or a combination, are obviously coming from Sue's happy place in her head. She shows me how she started a piece with a bright base of complimentary colored leaf shapes that look quite abstract. Over that she will layer paint and papers, in this case creating negative space, leaving the bright base as a centerpiece of flowers. No matter what technique she uses she ends up with cheerful paintings that never fail to make the viewer smile.

Some of Sue's art has a quite romantic feel. Using bits of lace as well as cut and torn paper, words torn from text, paint and charcoal a collage painting titled *Lady in Waiting* is simply gorgeous. In it, and other art, Sue will sometimes begin with a scribbled note on the canvas – perhaps a note to herself of the inspiration for the piece. Occasionally these cursive scribbles will peek out from behind the layers to tantalize the curious viewer.

Never missing the chance to try a new art form, Sue has a box of beautiful blue yarn that she will be trying her skill at knitting with. She also is experimenting with silver-clay which is microscopic particles of silver

(or copper or gold) suspended in an organic binder to create a pliable material with a consistency like modeling clay. The jewelry she has created with this is quite impressive.

Tearing ourselves away from the studio we peek into Mike Grilli's garage workshop. He is the master craftsman behind Sue's frames, panels and shelving for the studio. In fact he has had a hand in much of their home – remodeling the kitchen cabinets and built-ins – all helpful surrounding the artist with a space that supports her craft and sparks her creativity!

I really enjoyed visiting this talented Bluffton artist and her creative workplace. Sue Gilli is one of six artist/owners of the cooperative La Petite Gallerie in Old Town Bluffton. She generally works there on Thursdays where she is happy to greet you and talk art. Please visit soon to see her work in person!

Submitted by Murray Sease, fellow artist at La Petite Gallerie, 56 Calhoun Street, Bluffton, SC 29910 or visit (lapetitegallerie.com).

