

ISLAND



SPIRIT

Janelle Murraine brightens LeMoyné's International Holiday show

Amanda Sieradzki Council on Culture & Arts

Holiday memories transport the mind toward home. For painter Janelle Murraine, the U.S. Virgin Islands brings to mind coquito, a tropical eggnog treat, ham centerpieces and rollicking downtown festivities. ■ Two years ago, when she was in need of some soul searching, Murraine returned to St. Thomas and left behind her 13-year career in social work. After nine months of food, family and holiday joy, she came back to Tallahassee as a photographer for JCPenney Portraits. ■ Now, two years later she is a full-time artist who will have 27 pieces featured in the LeMoyné Arts 56th Annual Holiday Show.

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Quadrille Dancers by Janelle Murraine. JANELLE MURRAINE

Murraine

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Last May Murraine was headed to the portrait studio when the light and shadows cast by the sun caught her eye. She took out her camera and snapped some photos she thought would make interesting paintings. As someone who had grown up surrounded by creative family members — her mother is quick with a crochet and sewing needle and her brother pens fantastical animations — Murraine headed to the craft store to buy canvas and acrylic paints.

“I didn’t know anything, I had never painted before,” admits Murraine. “But I went straight for it and loved it. I felt like once I got anything I had pent-up on the inside on the canvas it was the most exhilarating, refreshing feeling. It was stepping into cool water on a hot day.”

Murraine continued to dive deeper, working anywhere from one to six hours a day in her apartment. She set up an easel near a bright light source and zoned in, calling upon the spirit of creativity to guide her brush. Murraine quickly consumed any video or book she could get her hands on about painting throughout the centuries and gravitated toward the life works of Leonardo DaVinci.

“He was an artist trapped in a genius’ mind and ahead of his time,” says Murraine. “I loved that he always found ways to be better and create opportunities for himself.”

In a similar fashion to DaVinci, Murraine first walked into Painting with a Twist looking to immerse herself in more opportunities. She showed the manager her work but wasn’t hired, so she went back to her canvas and visualized herself getting better. Three months later she walked back in, painted a portrait of twins she had photographed and was hired on the spot.

Though she struggled with acrylic paints when she first started, Murraine now enjoys working in both acrylic and oils. She’s appreciative of her colleagues who have helped her along the way, especially her manager who set up meetings twice a week to review color theory and other artistic principles. Murraine says the experience has taught her a lot about the benefits of persistence and positive thinking.

“You can’t allow anything that is happening on the outside affect what is happening on the inside,” says Murraine. “You have to know who you are and believe in yourself and keep pursuing your truth, whatever that is.”

Murraine describes her work as bold, colorful and daring. She imagines science fiction and fantasy blending with the real world, and paints portraits and landscapes that incorporate nature into humanity.

She’s particularly proud of one painting that encapsulates this approach which was donated to the North Florida Office of the Public Guardian. The portrait was of her nephew curled up in his mother’s arms. However, Murraine painted her sister as a blossoming azalea plant cloaking her son in warmth.

She calls this perspective finding the “truth of humanity” which she hopes showcases the vulnerability and beauty she sees in everyone’s figure and form regardless of social constructs and norms. This perspective aligns with her past career and education in psychology with a master’s degree in public administration.

“It is important for me to show that side of humanity because I’ve been so involved in it,” says Murraine.



Murraine



Sister Islands. JANELLE MURRAINE

If you go

What: The LeMoyné Arts 56th Annual Holiday Show

When: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday, 11 a.m.-8 a.m. Friday and Saturday, 1-5 p.m. Sunday through Dec. 24

Where: LeMoyné Arts 125 N Gadsden St.

Cost: Free for members, \$5 fee for non-members

Contact: For more information, call 850-222-8800 or visit <https://www.lemoyne.org/annual-holiday-show-event.html>.

“That was the nature of casework, helping people move from one stage of their life to a better stage of their life. It was always about helping them to see the opportunities to be in a better space. That’s the same thing I want to do in my paintings.”

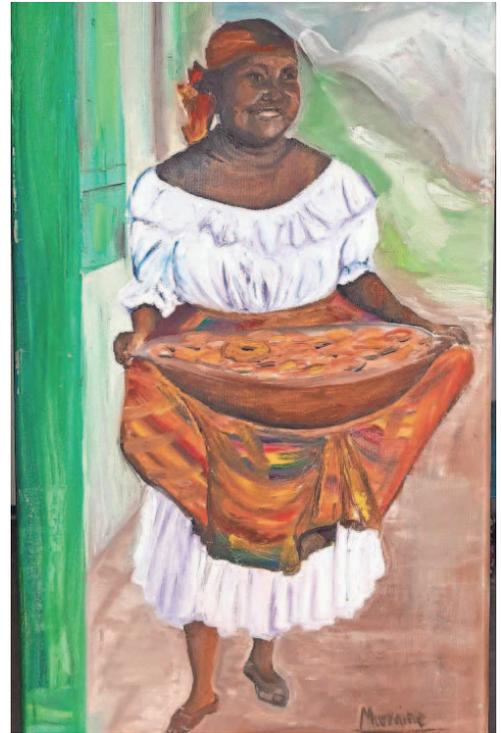
Murraine loved capturing her beliefs and culture in oils for LeMoyné’s The Art of Giving “An International Holiday.” Her pieces display the holiday traditions she misses most from St. Thomas. While some images come straight from her memories of a bustling downtown during the “Miracle on Main Street” festival, others were created from newspaper clippings or ear-worms from holiday carols.

Baskets of johnnycakes practically waft off one canvas as quadrille dancers swirl to the sound of steel drums in another. A storyteller at heart, Murraine hopes the movement and colors she infused into each work brings scenes to life for viewers. Moreover, she is eagerly anticipating finally being able to show friends and family the hard work and art she’s chosen as her life’s purpose.

“It has been a long journey and sometimes when you have a vision not everyone can see it so clearly,” says Murraine. “I want to encourage anyone out there that has a dream or goals that seem absurd or far reaching to continue to set the bar high for themselves to keep moving forward no matter what. Even when



St Croix 3 Kings Parade JANELLE MURRAINE



Woman with johnnycakes is among the works at holiday show at LeMoyné Arts. JANELLE MURRAINE

people say it can’t be done, don’t let them set the limits or how far you can go.”

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area’s umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).

Ireland Presentation
BRENDAN VACATIONS
 Brendan Vacations would like to personally invite you to come hear from...

Tallahassee Civic Chorale
 2019-20 Concert Season
 Dr. Leslie Hefner, Artistic Director
'Tis The Season
 Tuesday, December 10th
 7:00 in the evening