

Kevin Cooley



SavArtScene: Savannah spring abuzz with creativity at gallery events

By Kristopher Monroe
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Springtime is high season for Savannah. The air is not yet populated by the swarming gnat hordes and stifling humidity, but it is plenty abuzz with the creative energy that keeps the city vibrant.

Any number of festivals and events are packed into the balmy spring months, and that includes a multitude of art exhibitions and related activities. Below are a few notable upcoming and ongoing art events to complement your springtime escapades. This is only a sampling and by no means a comprehensive list, but hopefully it piques interest for a diversity of tastes.

“Reflections on Desires” by Anya Mitchell: The Starland District has become the epicenter of art activity and creative development, and Sulfur Studios is ground zero when it comes to the explosive growth the area has seen recently. Sulfur has a hand in everything from the First Friday Street Fair & Art Market to the routinely excellent events and exhibits they host at their expansive location on Bull Street. Their ON::VIEW Artist Residency program has been yet another invigorating way to activate the neighborhood, and the upcoming residency by Anya Mitchell, which runs through May 4, provides an interesting opportunity for engagement. Mitchell is inviting people into her open studio to join in an informal discussion around culture and diversity in Savannah and “have a go at paper weaving” with her. Info: Sulfur Studios, 2301 Bull St., sulfurstudios.org.

“TRANCE” and “Smoke & Mirrors”: Susan Laney has been upping the ante for the fine art scene in Savannah since the opening of her gallery. Laney Contemporary is just a hop, skip, and a jump from the downtown corridor and has already established a stellar lineup of exhibitions. On view through June 9 is Los Angeles-based Kevin Cooley’s immersive installation “Smoke & Mirrors” and Todd Schroeder’s “atomized acrylic” paintings, “TRANCE.” Both artists manifest their own distinct worldview in Laney’s distinctive gallery space and add to the shining roster of artists that are swiftly making Laney Contemporary a go-to for quality contemporary art in Savannah. Info: Laney Contemporary Fine Art, 1810 Mills B. Lane Blvd., laneycontemporary.com.

Oyster shell art by Renee Fabrikant: The Jewish Educational Alliance may not be the first place that comes to mind when thinking of art shows, but they routinely exhibit the work of a variety of artists and a variety of mediums. For their May exhibition, the JEA is featuring the work of Renee

Fabrikant, who uses hand-picked oyster shells from Tybee Island for her creations. Fabrikant is a Savannah native who works at United Way of the Coastal Empire and has received historic preservation awards for her restoration work on Tybee. Her work will be on view through the end of May. Info: Jewish Educational Alliance, 5111 Abercorn St., savannahjea.org.

Brown Dog Market and more: There are many changes going on at the historic Cohen's Retreat in the Moon River District. They recently debuted a special events venue, The Clubhouse, and are unveiling the "newly transformed" Brown Dog Market from noon-3 p.m. May 5. The Brown Dog Market showcases local artisans and features products from area retailers, with a coffee bar featuring Savannah-based PERC Coffee and baked goods from Auspicious Baking Co. Saturday's event will include "live music, margarita specials, snacks and a Succulent Bar by EverBloom Inc." Info: Cohen's Retreat, 5715 Skidaway Road, cohensretreat.com.

"The Art of Richard Law": Savannah-born Richard Law is a man of many talents. His paintings were recently featured at the Beach Institute African-American Cultural Center along with work by famed sculptor and wood carver Ulysses Davis and, like Davis, Law is also a longtime barber in addition to being an artist. The son of a social worker and minister, Law draws his inspiration from his "upbringing in the Deep South, black culture and the landscapes of the Lowcountry of Georgia and South Carolina." His paintings will be on view through June 22 at Raw Image. Info: Raw Image Barbershop & Boutique, 113 E. Montgomery St., theartofrichardlaw.com.

Susan Nuttall textured paintings and encaustics: Located in the Mansion on Forsyth Park, the Grand Bohemian Gallery regularly offers an assortment of options for the discriminating art collector. One currently featured artist is Susan Nuttall, whose textured paintings use mediums like oil glazes and hot wax encaustics. Info: Grand Bohemian Gallery, 700 Drayton St., mansiononforythpark.com.

There are, of course, many other events and exhibitions planned over the upcoming months and beyond. This list is meant only to give a taste of the range of options available for Savannah art-goers beyond the usual confines of downtown.

Looking ahead, there are plenty of noteworthy events to put on your calendar, including Telfair Museums' always eclectic mix of contemporary and classic art exhibitions. "The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip" is on view at the Jepson Center through Sept. 3. Then later in September, "Monet to Matisse: Masterworks of French Impressionism" opens, which is sure to be a crowd-pleaser. Info: telfair.org.

The Design District is also a hotbed of artistic activity with the regularly excellent exhibitions at Location Gallery, 417 Whitaker St., and neighboring Roots Up Gallery, 412-C Whitaker St. Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum also has an interesting exhibition opening May 18, "Making Waves: A Collective Perspective on the Pollution of Our Waterways."

Also, be sure to check out Do Savannah each Thursday for more coverage of these and other arts events.

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