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Two Louisiana artists show portraiture never out of fashion

Baton Rouge, La. — Our houses were made for them, with their high ceilings and mantles in every room. Louisiana is no stranger to oil portraiture, and this Friday two Louisiana artists, Sarah Griffin Thibodeaux and Julie Dupre Buckner, remind us why we love portraits and why we keep the tradition of portraiture alive. Their show of oil paintings, “The Art of the Portrait,” opens this Friday, October 5, 2007, with a reception from 6-9:30 p.m. at Wealth Planners, 6340 Perkins Road in Baton Rouge.

“I paint portraits because I want to connect with the subject, want to know who she is, what makes her light up,” says Griffin Thibodeaux. “There are few subjects more compelling than a portrait, each face holding a million stories.”

Thibodeaux and Buckner belong to the long tradition of oil painting, handed down through the ages, embodied in such masters as John Singer Sargent. Their portraits feature their subjects in classical poses, standing, sitting, engaged in the characteristic activities that define them.

Today, however, the clothing is contemporary, and so is the brushwork.

Thibodeaux’s portraits are brushy and fresh. Her motto is “stop before you ruin it” and she makes every effort to keep the painting lifelike and honest.

Buckner’s portraits are smooth and polished. Her skin tones shine and the details of jewelry and strands of hair sparkle.

Both painters paint people of all ages, from babies and toddlers on up. Both use a combination of live sittings and reference photographs, but both insist on taking the photos themselves.

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"The light has to be just right," Buckner notes. "It's usually not feasible to use a snapshot. It's simply not the right light for a portrait." Buckner handles her own photography and works out of her Plaquemines, La., studio. Thibodeaux does as many sittings from life as the client will tolerate and then does the rest from her studio.

Each of the two artists finds that the process of painting a portrait is a collaboration between artist and sitter. "We come to the right pose together, discussing everything from clothes to couches," Thibodeaux notes. "Portraiture is unique in that it is a process that invites the subject in. No other art form does that in the same way."

In addition to portraits, both artists paint the Louisiana landscape in "plein air." Even though it's called "The Art of the Portrait," the show includes a few familiar landscapes, of live oaks and rich grasses, slow bayous and cypress trees.

Teaching is a part of both artist's process.

Buckner teaches academic art lessons at Live Oaks Plantation in Rosedale, La., and an abstract painting class for beginners in Baton Rouge. Buckner explains, "I find my portrait work benefits from my varied experience with different mediums and styles."

Thibodeaux teaches figure drawing out of her Washington, D.C., studio. "I find the experience of teaching to be as rewarding for me as I hope it is for my students. Drawing from the figure is an essential part of learning to paint." "The Art of the Portrait" runs from Friday October 5, 2007, to December 21, 2007, at Wealth Planners, 6340 Perkins Road in Baton Rouge. The artists will be present to talk about their work and the process of commissioning a portrait at the opening reception, this Friday October 5, 2007, from 6-9:30 p.m.

For additional information or a sample copy, Contact: Sarah Griffin Thibodeaux at (504)432-0049 or sarah@studiothibodeaux.com.

Studio Thibodeaux specializes in fine art oil portraits by Louisiana artist Sarah Griffin Thibodeaux.

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