

Americana on Canvas:

Cavanaugh and Sue rekindle American pride



Economic panic, war and natural disasters may be representing America in international headlines, but new residents of the country, like artist Gail Sue, wish more people could stop a minute and appreciate the awe-inspired beauty that spans the country coast-to-coast.

"Since relocating to Wilmington in 2007 from Sydney, Australia, I have had the opportunity to visit many beautiful American cities," Sue tells. How did she plan to share her journey with the world? By painting it, of course. "Being an artist, it was only logical to pick up a canvas and a brush, and start painting," she says.

Her studio at Acme Art Studios on North Fifth Avenue quickly became a brightly colored tribute to her new home—and her new friends. "The artists at Acme have become my American family," she says. It was here that Sue met Deborah Cavanaugh, and the two women immediately bonded over a love for capturing American beauty on their canvases.

"[Deborah] is a wonderful artist of the Americana way of life, a true patriot," Sue observes. "To my absolute delight, she liked what I was doing, too!"

"When I first saw Gail's paintings of American street scenes and landscapes, I loved them so much for their color and their structure

and their depth of texture and emotion," Cavanaugh says. "I immediately wanted to do a show with her. Both of us would be painting America... me from the inside and her from the outside."

The "outside," in Sue's collection is, as Cavanaugh stated, street scenes and landscapes. However, there is something alive in Sue's brushstroke, making her paintings more than just the average outdoor scene. Depending upon the color palette, they have moods. A city street in the painting "Chinatown" is done in runny greens, yellows and reds, alluding to the end of the day when the colorful street and its residents are tired and ready for a rest. A quirky three-story building in another piece, however, is painted in cheery purples and pinks, like a giddy girl all dressed up and ready for a big party. The contrast is a flattering statement about the different personalities that inhabit our country, our towns and sometimes even our bodies.

Most of Cavanaugh's heartfelt collection, meant to draw from the "inside," seem like stories from a children's book: buying fruits and veggies from a farmer's stand, flying a kite, and frolicking on the beach.

One painting, though, does stand out as a bit more sober than the rest: a pieced-together image of the American flag.

"I am often asked what kind of painter I am," she says in response to the stark difference between the flag and her other work. "I always answer, 'I paint Americana.'" She goes on to defend her often sunny portrait of the American life, stating that it might be more attainable than some think, depending upon one's attitude. "There is always a list of what is wrong and what needs work," she says. "That is not where my attention goes. I paint about what is good that is not always noticed, what is beautiful that is not always seen, what is blessed that is not always acknowledged. I paint about who I am, where I came from, what I value, and what I see as good and important. I am painting not just my own memories and dreams but the dreams of those of us who believe in the light of America. I am painting about the beauty of the small, blessed moments in this, our American life."

"Americana: featuring Gail Sue and Deborah Cavanaugh" will open at Bottega Gallery at 208 North Front Street on October 24th with an artist reception at 6pm. Visit www.bottegageallery.com or call 910-763-3737 for more details.