



FEATURED GALLERY

Katharine Butler Gallery

BY BROOKSIE BERGEN / PHOTO BY MARK SICKLES

Katharine Butler had a vision when she opened her gallery in February 2000: to support local artists while reaching out to the larger arts community in a meaningful way. Her gallery, housed in a cottage in Towles Court, displays her paintings as well as those of other skilled craftspersons.

Representing photography and mixed media as well as graphics and prints, participating artists include Norine and David Zapata, Mark Wholey, Marina Preston, Larry Fogard, David Thalmann, Howard Cowdrick, Justin Freed and Richard Hora.

The interiors of the vintage bungalow-type cottages, built by Chicago entrepreneur William Towles in 1920 for winter residents, business owners and professionals, offer homey settings for displaying artwork, rather than the stark walls of more contemporary galleries. The cottages were renovated and redesigned in 1993 as an artist's colony, where artists could live, create, educate, share ideas and sell their work.

When Katharine Butler purchased one of the empty lots, she took care to utilize as much of the 50-by-100-foot site as was allowed, while adding an apartment with a studio upstairs. Under the direction of architect Robert Steuber, the new building was constructed to resemble the older homes.

"I wanted to retain the flavor of the neighborhood, complete with a porch on both floors," Butler said. "I reserved gallery space for myself, and then invited other artists to join me."

Always civic minded, Butler annually donates a percentage of the proceeds from her holiday show to the All Faiths Food Bank, but this year she specified that the money would benefit the victims of the recent hurricanes. "We appreciate what a massive task the Red Cross has undertaken in the wake of not one, but four devastating hurricanes," she said. "We hope our contribution helped."

Butler's charitable gestures are not new to Sarasota residents. She has contributed to organizations such as the Education Foundation by donating gallery space for one month to 25 top high school artists in Sarasota County, thereby giving them a professional exhibition of their work. Her gallery has also helped raise money for the Sarasota Arts Council by collaborating on an annual lecture series featuring prominent local art columnists.

Ensclosed in her cozy bungalow on Morrill Street, Butler, a painter and printer specializing in watercolor landscapes, seascapes and still lifes, welcomes customers to her unique gallery.

The Katharine Butler Gallery is located at 1943 Morrill St., Sarasota, 955-4546. Gallery Hours: Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-4 p.m.