



TREE'S PLACE
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Art of love: A Valentine exhibit at Tree's Place Gallery

Flowers are the ultimate expression of love. Colorful, graceful and alive, flowers are soft and delicate, yet spring from sturdy stems that sometimes have thorns. And like every love story, every flower is unique.

This month's frigid, snowy weather makes flowers an especially welcome sight, so the current exhibit at Tree's Place in Orleans is not only timely, as it celebrates Valentine's Day, but a lovely respite from winter.

"Expressions of Love, Poetry and Romance" is almost entirely composed of paintings of flowers, and each one is expressive.

Tree's Place owner Mike Donovan said the works featured in the exhibit were chosen for the sense of romance they convey.

"We have a lot of artists who do florals," he said, and this seemed the perfect month to highlight them.

Entering the gallery is like walking into a summer garden, sunny and lush with color. The exhibit combines paintings of different sizes and styles, but their shared subject matter makes it cohesive.

Among the larger works is Christopher Pierce's "Peonies in Japanese Vase," a rich, dramatic composition. Pierce is best known as a portrait artist, which helps explain why his flowers have such personality and depth; it feels as if a viewer could walk up to the canvas and pluck out a stem. "Four White Peonies" is equally lifelike.

In a similar style is New Hampshire artist Sam Vokey's "Peonies" and "Calla Lily," which has a particular presence.

Boston artist Dana Levin's "The Wedding Painting" is an evocative still life, with an empty white pitcher surrounded by creamy blossoms, including roses, peonies and lilies – a perfect metaphor for a shared life just beginning, with the elements yet to be arranged together in a common vessel.

Levin, whose paintings have the quality of old masters, brings a dusky luminosity to "One Pink Rose," also featured in the show.

Sarah Lamb also paints in the style of the old masters but uses contemporary subjects for her still life paintings, which are beautifully realistic and combine the burnished light of a hushed cathedral with unexpected subjects, such as a cream puff.

Likewise, Falmouth artist Adam Rhude brings classic style to unconventional subjects, including "Cookies." Donovan said the gallery recently sold one of Rhude's paintings that "I would have loved to have in this show – it's called 'Box of Chocolates.'"

Stuart Dunkel's whimsical and yet lifelike paintings add a playful element. All feature a small white mouse with personality. "Candy Necklace," is a portrait of the mouse nibbling on the title element, and "Bluedog" has the mouse staring quizzically at a blue glass figurine.

More impressionistic is Kathy Anderson's "Sweet Pea and Hydrangea," a delightful blend of color and motion that is unexpected in a still life. "Quince and White Pansies" is also lovely, rich in color and depth.

In a similar style, Orleans artist Rosalie Nadeau's "Pinks and Pears" has a sense that the person arranging the blossoms has just stepped away for a moment and will return to pick up the shears and add a few more stems. Her "Fallen Petals" is both beautiful and evocative.

The exhibit features several paintings by Colin Berry, whose distinctive style and composition make his paintings arresting. "Velvet Serenade," featuring two perfect roses set in a teacup on a ledge overlooking distant green fields and blue mountains, carries a sense of some exotic locale. "Lavender Tranquility" is a similar composition done in hues that are fresh and unusual.

The lone non-floral work in the exhibit is "Prelude," a panoramic beach scene with two people seated looking out at the water by Patrick Kitson.

"It's got a romantic feel to it," said Donovan, noting that Kitson, a Pennsylvania artist who vacations on the Cape, is known for his photo-realistic style.

"Prelude" is realism enhanced; it's a scene of incredible tranquility and calm, and evocative of the best kind of romance: quiet and deep.

Uplifting and thoughtful, "Expressions of Love" is a haven of color and warmth – just like love itself.



'Velvet Serenade,' and oil on board by Colin Berry, on view at the Gallery at Tree's Place in Orleans. COURTESY PHOTOS