

STEPHANIE LUSK

*Director of Marlene Yu Museum
and Rainforest Art Foundation*

SB: Tell us about the Rainforest Art Foundation.

SL: The Rainforest Art Foundation was started in 2001 by my mom, Marlene Yu. She wanted to find other artists who wanted to express their love of nature through art. Our mission is to increase appreciation of nature through art. Her hope is to make it a global movement.

SB: Why did the Rainforest Art Foundation decide to open a Shreveport location?

SL: Both of my parents are in New York. I used to joke that I'd either have to have a baby or an art show to get them to visit us. When we had our son, Wyatt, it worked. They came to visit us a lot more, and my dad, with his real estate development background, started looking around and thought downtown Shreveport might be a good place for the long term.

SB: When will the Marlene Yu Museum be open?

SL: Dec. 21 is our grand opening and Dec. 18 is a preview party.

SB: What can the people expect from those events?

SL: We are opening with the first phase of construction, which are the main exhibition hall of the Rainforest Art Foundation and the main exhibition hall of the Marlene Yu Museum. The building is 41,000 square feet, so there's a lot of room for community use. People will get to come inside this first contemporary art museum in Shreveport and get a good taste of what else is to come.

SB: Tell us about Marlene's work.

SL: She works with acrylic on canvas and paper. Some pieces are as small as 16-inches and as long as 37-feet or 18-feet high. They're very colorful, vibrant works. She paints different phenomena in nature, and she has 4,000 plus works. We'll have a collection at the museum, and she has some all over the world. She's shown mostly in the U.S., Europe and Asia.

SB: What was it like growing up with an artist?

SL: I kind of took the art for granted. To me it was like wallpaper. I didn't really get a good appreciation of art until I started helping out with some of the publication and websites. Then I got to learn about her art more, and now I love it.

