

Louisiana trip inspires work in artist's exhibit

By Michele Marcotte
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Nature constantly changes.

"It keeps moving even if we don't notice it; and because of that moving effect it has life," New York artist Marlene Yu said.

Yu, who is known for nature-inspired works transporting viewers inside the setting, seeks to capture that movement in her paintings. A native of Taiwan, Yu's work integrates Chinese landscape painting and American Expressionism, integrating the Chinese philosophy of art with modern application.

"I like to express the life and spirit of nature," she said. "I like to express my painting in the moment of action."

In the past, that moment has been illustrated in rainforests, glaciers, coral reefs, volcanoes and other natural elements or phenomena. Her 70th solo exhibition, which opens Sept. 25 at the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum, represents the swamps and coastline of Louisiana's landscape.

"Purple Swamp & Nature Abstraction" is the first show of the seven series exhibition "Lucky 7s" in celebration of Yu's 77th birthday.

The exhibit is inspired by a May trip Yu made to south Louisiana with Lt. Gov. Jay Dardenne. While touring the Atchafalaya basin and Grand Isle, Yu learned of the devastation Louisiana's gulf coastline faces as it erodes, and she saw cypress trees for the first time.

The largest piece in the exhibit is the 32-foot long "Purple Swamp/Tiger Lily." It will be displayed with selections from other series, including "Amber Glow," "Cave Garden," "Cave Treasure" and "Blue Lagoon." The exhibit runs through Oct. 31.

Subsequent shows within the "Lucky 7s" — each with their own theme — will follow varying points throughout this year and next at venues including the Robinson Film Center, artspace, Sci-Port: Louisiana's Science Center, Bossier Arts Council, Meadows Museum of Art at Centenary College, and the Marlene Yu Museum under construction on Travis Street.

Each exhibition includes selections from Yu's 4,000-painting catalog. Themed shows include works inspired by rainforests and fire, some depicting natural disasters and the elements, as well as others from a period in which Yu illustrated a love story between the figurative female and her male counterpart, represented by animals.

Admission varies at each exhibit, and visitors can print an online passport at

Marlene Tseng Yu's Purple Swamp and Nature Abstraction will show at the Louisiana State Exhibit museum.



Artist Marlene Yu stands in front of her acrylic on canvas "Black and White Cracked Ice" on display at The Marlene Yu Museum at 710 Travis in downtown Shreveport. The museum is scheduled to open Dec. 21.

JIM HUDELSON/THE TIMES

museum.org/passport to be stamped at each of the seven locations. Passports with all seven stamps can be turned into the Marlene Yu Museum at the conclusion of "Lucky 7s" for a collectible book.

In 2001, Yu founded Rainforest Art Foundation to bring like-minded artists involved in the green arts movement together. The foundation purchased the former YWCA, which it's renovating into a contemporary art museum featuring Yu's work and to house its headquarters.

The foundation and museum want to help make Shreveport an international destination for nature-in-



Artist Marlene Yu

spired arts, as well as an educational and cultural hub by strengthening the downtown arts community, attracting young talent to work, play and stay, and furthering the area's intergenerational family values.

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LUCKY 7S

Purple Swamp and Nature Abstraction
Sept. 25-Oct. 31 at Louisiana State Exhibit Museum. Exhibit features Yu's most recent paintings inspired by the swamps of south Louisiana. Meet Marlene Party, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Sept. 25.

Emerald Forest Series
Sept. 26-Nov. 29 at Robinson Film Center. Exhibit features works inspired by the rainforest, the movie "The Emerald Forest" and humankind's relation to nature.

Fire — Element of Life
Nov. 15-Jan. 17 at Mainspace @artspace. Exhibit features fire-inspired works from multiple series.

Forces of Nature
Dec. 18-May 31 at Marlene Yu Museum, 710 Travis St. Exhibit features paintings from Yu's 50-year series relating to natural disasters and the elements. Preview party for museum grand opening, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Dec. 18, and museum grand opening, 1-4 p.m. Dec. 21. Tickets for both available online at marleneyumuseum.org or by calling 717-9111.

Dream Series
Feb. 21-May 3 at Meadows Museum of Art at Centenary College. Exhibit explores Yu's uncharacteristically figurative works from a three-year period depicting a love story between the figurative female and her male counterpart represented by various animals.

Melting Glacier Series
March 17-April 26 at Sci-Port: Louisiana's Science Center. Exhibit falls in line with Earth Day and Sci-Port will have an environmental education program in honor of National Environmental Education Week.

Crystal Reef Series
June 1-July 31, Bossier Arts Council. Exhibit includes paintings of coral and underwater structures.