

# The City of Raleigh, NC, Offers Several Exhibitions at the Sertoma Arts Center

The City of Raleigh, NC, is presenting several exhibits on view at the Sertoma Arts Center, located in the heart of Shelley Lake Park, Raleigh, including: *Lines that Connect - A Confluence of Celtic Knots, Kolam, and Mandana*, featuring works by Sampada Kodagali Agarwal, on view in the Raleigh Room, through June 25; *Both/And*, featuring a collection of modern quilts by Jennifer (Jenn) Marks, on view in the Hall Gallery, through June 25; and *Multifarious Imaginations*, featuring digital blended collages that create a bright, fun, unique, and visionary experience by Mark C. Blanchard, on view in the Wall Case, through June 25, 2025.

The main goal driving Sampada Kodagali Agarwal's creative journey is to use art as a medium to highlight similarities, celebrate differences, and keep art at the forefront. She grew up seeing her mother make floor art at the entrance of their home in India, every single day. So, this seemed a natural starting point for her.

Kodagali Agarwal takes this opportunity to showcase two of the (many) traditional floor art styles from India (Kolam and Mandana), in a global context. When she studied a Kolam motif, she saw similarities with Celtic knots; the intricacies of the Mandana style could add further pizzazz to the knot work. Such merging of styles seemed a logical progression for her. She has explored non-traditional mediums like found wood, dry leaves, and acrylic sheets, along with the use of red clay; thus, making art more contemporary, yet rooted in tradition.

Kodagali Agarwal is a passionate visual artist, based in Morrisville, NC, who has spent more than two decades exploring traditional folk and tribal arts from India, the country of her birth; while living in the United States, her adopted country. She is also a Certified Zentangle Teacher.

Kodagali Agarwal finds joy in bringing art into everyday life by using different mediums like ceramic, wood, canvas, paper, fabric and even an organic medium like dry leaves! The different mediums add another dimension to the merging of the styles and pushes the envelope. After all, isn't that the purpose of art - to provide your viewer food for thought?

A selection of modern quilts designed and sewn by Jennifer Marks. She resists the constraints of either/or in her life and in her work. Our brains, seeking pattern and order, try to categorize and sort all we see into mutually exclusive, tidy boxes. Yet we humans are complex, multifaceted, messy.

This selection of both highly structured, symmetrical, even minimalist designs; and improvisationally designed and pieced works with varying degrees of thematic boundaries such as color, shape, and size demonstrate both the need for order and the desire for freedom from its constraints.

Viewers are invited to consider the ways they themselves are more complex than

simple binary categories can capture. Have you experienced being labeled as one thing, but knowing that you are so much more?

Marks is a modern quilter living in Raleigh, NC - where she also spent her childhood, before a stint on the North Shore of Massachusetts long enough to still be able to easily slip into a convincing Boston accent. She earned her PhD in Sociology from NC State University, which is to say that her artistic education has been decidedly nontraditional and informal - two adjectives that could be used to describe Jenn overall. She is also a wife, mother of two teens, and an E-RYT 500 certified Yoga teacher. She learned to sew as many women do, from her mother, primarily garments and home goods. Once she got a taste of modern quilting, there was no turning back.

The exhibit, *Multifarious Imaginations*, exhibits digital blended collages that create a bright, fun, unique, and visionary experience by Mark C. Blanchard. The project is a conglomeration of vivid imagination. These pieces blend patterns, images, and designs until a saturation of swirling colors comes alive into a new living artistic creation.

The origin of each "imagination" starts with abandoning preconceived conceptions. Free of judgments of possibilities that allow the artistic spirits to come alive and transform into illogical absurdities that breathe new life as a harmonious creation.

Blanchard's goal as a creator is to persuade the viewer to explore the poetic romance within the pulse of rhythms and vibrations of their own imagination.

Blanchard is a NC native, born in Tarboro, and currently calls Garner his home. He started his artistic journey at an early age with drawing and painting. After a love of music came along, he ended up playing in a psychedelic-rock band in Raleigh in the late 80's. When the Rockstar vision fizzled, photography became his main exploration and continues to be his main artistic inspiration today, but now with more of an abstract examination.

These days Blanchard is still creative in photography, but mostly he is spending his artistic energy developing digital collages that create unique works of art that are bright and fun and produce a unique and visionary experience.

With any of these artistic journeys, Blanchard's playful energy is to create a mood with his art that's more airy than grounded, foolish rather than factual, but in the end, sincere enough to generate feelings and emotions within the viewer.

Blanchard has exhibited at the Durham Art Guild, Carrack Gallery, ArtSpace, and Duke University Hospital along with various art markets in the Triangle area.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Center at 919/996-2329 or e-mail to (sertomaartscenter@raleighnc.gov).

# Craven Allen Gallery in Durham, NC, Offers Works by James Keul

Craven Allen Gallery in Durham, NC, is presenting *James Keul: A Painter's Life*, on view through June 21, 2025.

James Keul's new show, *A Painter's Life*, examines our connection to nature. Keul is an accomplished artist who has taught painting around the world, working in a variety of mediums to develop the deft, painterly technique seen in his work.

The exhibition includes a selection of plein air works from his native North Carolina and abroad, as well as large-scale paintings which explore the impact humans are having on the natural world. In these paintings, Keul includes figures, both adults and children, to invite us to consider how our actions will impact future generations.

Keul values art not only for its own sake, but also as a meditative practice which has guided his life. "Having had an unconventional adolescence, flying back and forth between parents and coasts, and being sent, at age 16, to a therapeutic boarding school in Western Samoa, art has been true north on my life's compass, Page 32 - Carolina Arts, June 2025



Work by James Keul

helping to guide me through some turbulent events and teaching me the value of patience, perseverance, and humility" he says.

Keul's work can be found in important public and private collections around the world. As an educator committed to empowering the next generation of artists, he will be teaching a group of Savannah College of Art and Design students at their continued above on next column to the right

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campus in Lacoste, France this summer.

Keul offered the following artist's statement, "Having had an unconventional adolescence, flying back and forth between parents...and coasts, and being sent, at age 16, to a therapeutic boarding school in Western Samoa, art has been true north on my life's compass, helping to guide me through some turbulent events and teaching me the value of patience, perseverance, and humility. Valuing the role artmaking plays in my mental health, I have approached art as a practice similar to meditation."

"My sense of curiosity is equally matched with my work ethic and, as such, I have created art in a wide range of mediums and subjects. Rather than editorializing my experiences, I have typically prioritized trying to represent the world as it appears to me, and in my plein air work, let the visual language of paint be the only filter through which I manipulate the scenes. An exception to this is my studio work and, in particular, my series relating to Climate Change."

"The painting *Fish in Troubled Waters*, hanging on the end wall, represents the plight of coastal-dwelling populations due to rising sea levels and is based on my experience in Samoa, where I have witnessed coastal erosion and degraded coral reefs, and have been told by Samoans how little it seems their voice can be heard at a global level," added Keul. "The piece was included in the 5th National Climate Assessment and Climate Literacy Guide, representing Hawaii and US-affiliated Pacific Islands and a reproduction is featured in *Art x Climate*, an exhibition at the National Museum of Natural History, which opened April 22, 2025."

"While some of my works relating to the environment are direct, others are more subtle, as in the *Moral Threads* series of monotypes, having to do with consumption, environmental impact, and developing personal connections. This show threads together the strands of my life, from contemplative landscapes to socially and environmentally-engaged work, where technical and thematic narratives



Work by James Keul

meet," said Keul.

James Keul received a Bachelors of Fine Art in painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design and continued his education at the Art Students League of New York, where he studied with artists Frank Mason, Mary Beth Mckenzie, Costa Vavagiakis and Cornelia Foss. His works grace collections around the world, including the Bekkjarvik Arts Society in Norway and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Tokyo, and have appeared nationally and internationally in over 100 solo and group exhibitions, most recently at the GreenHill Center for NC Art, CAM Raleigh, and the Brown Gallery at Duke University.

Keul is also a teaching artist and considers himself to be a lifelong student. He was trained in classical oil painting materials and techniques using Dumond's Prismatic Palette, which is an invaluable tool for understanding value and color temperature. Keul is proud of this heritage and enjoys passing this knowledge along to a new generation of students.

This is his first show at Craven Allen Gallery.

Craven Allen Gallery is located on continued on Page 33