

# In a WORLD of HER OWN

Only God can make a tree, but Ramsey Gardes Ayers works in mixed media acrylic collages to create beautiful evocations of his handiwork.

BY JUDY JOHNSON

**Do you work a day job to support your career as an artist? How is it related or unrelated to your artwork?**

I actually am pretty lucky that being an artist is my only job. It was a decision my husband and I sat down and made. I was to give it my all — 110 percent — for an entire year, and if it worked, then great, but if it did not then I was going to have to find something else to do as well. Luckily, it has been working so far!

**What artwork or books have influenced you?**

I have always admired the works of Henri Matisse and Paul Gauguin: Matisse for his use of color and pattern and Gauguin for his style and subject matter. There have been plenty of current-day artists as well who have impacted how I perceive and portray art, but I would have to say that Matisse and Gauguin's influence is the most dominant in my work.

**What artists have you studied with or from?**

Zero — at this time

**What is your advice for aspiring artists?**

You have to do what you enjoy and be willing to give it your all. There will be tons of people along the way who do not understand your work, or even like it at all, but if you are passionate about what you do, then it comes through in your work and that is a quality that attracts many people. It is a little frightening to put your heart and soul into a piece and put it out there for others to judge, but it comes with the territory, and the rewards are sweet when you find those who appreciate your work. Take a chance and then be patient!

**Why do you live and work in Acadiana?**

Well, I actually do not live in Acadiana, but I do choose to show most of my work here; I am from Lafayette but am living in Shreveport right now. I choose to work in Acadiana because I find that there is such a diverse group of people here passionate about the arts and supportive of local artists. It makes doing what I do all the better when you have the support of the community and the appreciation from your peers. Acadiana has such great respect for

## ON VIEW

Ramsey Ayers  
Official Artist for Festival  
International de Louisiane 2004

Ayers' original painting for Festival will soon be on display and can be viewed in the poster created for Festival by Anne and Curtis Darrah of Darrah Design+Marketing. Her next show in Acadiana will be Feb. 2-March 29 at Café des Amis, 140 E. Bridge St., Breaux Bridge.

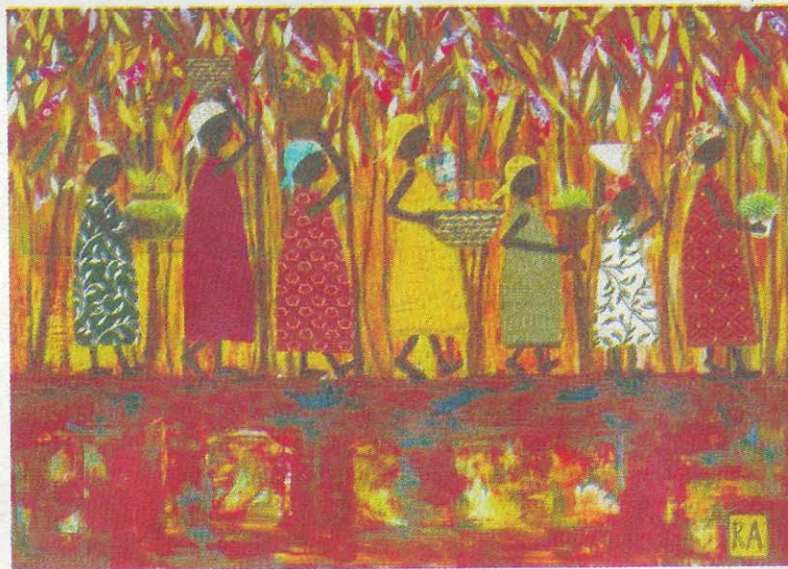


Ramsey Ayers with her 2004 Festival piece

our culture and for the arts, and there is no place I would feel more comfortable doing what I do than here!

**What kind of work environment do you prefer? How do you create that space for yourself?**

I would love to say that I enjoy working in a neatly organized space, but, sadly, that isn't true! My art room is scattered from floor to ceiling with boxes of fabrics, jars of beads, stacks of paper and magazines everywhere — it is snug but comfortable! I have a great big window in my art room, and my easel faces outside. I listen to all kinds of music while I work — jazz, African drums, bluegrass, lots of CDs that I buy at Festival



The Offering



Family of Five

International. As long as I have good music, and good lighting, and everything I need at my fingertips, I am content.

**Who is or was your greatest teacher?**

I would have to give credit to a teacher I had at Louisiana State University, Kimberly Arp. It was in his intaglio and lithography classes that my little village people evolved, and it was the one class I felt really at ease with my work. He encouraged their growth and liked my style and made me want to keep challenging myself to create a world for them. His influence and guidance played an important part of where I am today.

**What medium challenges you the most?**

Pencil! I have a hard time drawing realism. Portraits and still lifes are very challenging. I have always struggled with them, and I guess that's why I enjoy creating a make-believe world — nothing has to be perfect.

**What's the best book you've read lately?**

I'm going to be honest: I haven't read in a while. This year has been crazy, between my work and travels and construction on our house. My husband and I bought a house built in the '20s and have been renovating it all year. It's left me with little time to read. I really do wonder where all my time goes!

**What's your favorite:**

**Movie?** *A Walk in the Clouds*

**Midnight snack?** Tabasco Cheez-Its

**Car?** Any car big enough to haul all my canvases!

**Musical artist?** Tracy Chapman

**Color?** Chinese Red

**What's always in your refrigerator?**

Diet Dr. Pepper, Greek salad peppers, Coors Light and Albert's Hot Sauce. You can

Continued on Page 24

THE TIMES DECEMBER 31, 2003 PAGE 23



Orange Landscape

Continued from Page 23  
pretty much guarantee all those things will be there.

**What's your greatest extravagance?**

Traveling. I have been very fortunate that I have been able to see so much. I love to travel overseas and still want to visit many more places — Greece is next on my wish list!

**What's something you would never do?**

Anything labeled "Extreme Sport." I have kayaked, white water rafted and we canyoning in Switzerland, which is illegal in the United States. If anything scary could have happened while doing those sports, did while I was doing it! I think it took the daredevil out of me for good!

**What character — in a book, movie or song — are you most similar to?**

Wow, that's a hard one. I might have pass on this question!

**What's something about you that people would be surprised to know?**

When I graduated LSU with a fine art degree, it was never my intention to pursue anything art related. Even though I really enjoyed art, it just wasn't something I thought I could excel in. I wanted to be party planner instead — or, in more professional terms, an event coordinator. It wasn't until I moved to Shreveport and began painting on my own terms that I started creating some pieces that I really liked. I had never done collage work in school, so all this was new to me. After experimenting with fabrics and beads and texture on canvas, I started to find my "niche."

**Would you share with us your artist's statement?**

I enjoy creating this make-believe world that I call *Juniper Island*... women dressed in vibrant fabrics and beads pop right off the canvas. I like to capture their everyday movements — washing clothes, feeding their children and fishing the creeks. It is there, in those moments, that the love and trust that surrounds their culture is most apparent. It is a fictitious world, of course, a land where dreams aren't materialistic, a place where family values interweave through everything and a world where time stands still. Painting these people reminds me to slow down in my own world. It is my chance to escape, and my time to relax. If you want to do the same jump in! They are always welcoming.

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PAGE 24 DECEMBER 31, 2003 TH