

Juror's Statement for the Exhibition Catalog for *Magical Botanical*, the Seventh Annual Grand Isle Juried Exhibition

I have always been drawn to the lush, green landscape of Louisiana. Growing up surrounded by arching tree branches and azalea bushes turned bright pink by the dense blossoms are reminders of the tropical beauty that makes Louisiana such an exquisite place — an environment that I often take for granted. Having seen first hand the results of the gray sludge that killed our botanical landscape after Katrina, I became convinced that the splendor that we enjoy must be nurtured and protected. I applaud the Grand Isle Community Development Team for finding a creative way to draw attention to the plight of the vanishing wetlands through this annual art exhibition. Since its inaugural exhibition in 2003, school children, professional artists and visitors to the exhibitions have developed a greater awareness about the importance of the wetlands to the preservation of the beauty of our state.

The theme of this year's exhibition, "Magical Botanical," describes, for me, the mysterious and enchanting nature of the landscape that we are surrounded by everyday. I use references of nature in my own work because I am always amazed at the variety and complexity of the botanical world and its resilience in the midst of hardship. Watching my own garden in the front yard of my home reemerge from the muck of Hurricane Katrina was like watching a rebirth — life, green and vibrant, poking out of the crusty ground. The work that I selected for this exhibition demonstrates the magic and mystery that the natural world contributes to our lives.

I was impressed by the strong and diverse work that was presented to me in the jurying process, from traditional painting to digital work to mixed media to installation. In the selection process, I tried to choose work that honored the theme of "Magical Botanical," work that explored our flora and fauna through expressions of its beauty, fragility and potential vulnerability. I want to congratulate all those artists whose work has been chosen for the exhibition and to the award winners. It has been a great honor for me to serve as the juror of this exhibition, not only because it gives me a chance to draw attention to the accomplished work that is being created in our region, but also because I am able to help support the continued effort of rebuilding the Louisiana coast.

Mary Jane Parker
March 2009

Mary Jane Parker received her BFA from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in studio art and her MFA from Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois, in studio art with an emphasis in printmaking. Ms. Parker was the recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2007 and a Louisiana Division of the Arts Individual Artist Fellowship in 1990 and 2001. She was

also awarded a National Endowment for the Arts/Southern Arts Federation Award for Excellence in Works on Paper in 1990. Ms. Parker used an NEA Independent Study Fellowship to travel along the pilgrimage route in France and Spain. In addition, she studied color woodcut in Florence, Italy using a Surdna Foundation Fellowship.

Ms. Parker's work, mixed media combining printmaking and painting techniques with glass and bronze sculpture, has been exhibited nationally and internationally and is represented in New Orleans by Arthur Roger Gallery. An installation entitled "Skycharts" was exhibited at the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans, Louisiana in 2000. In 2005 her work was included in the New Orleans Museum of Art's "Triennial Exhibition of Contemporary Art" and "Homegrown: Southeast," an invitational exhibition organized by the Southeast Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Currently Mary Jane serves on the board of the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans as the Visual Arts Coordinator. Ms. Parker is the chairperson of the visual arts department at the New Orleans Center for Creative Art and a member of the teaching faculty.