



COURTESY ART

ABOVE: "MYAKKA RIVER #114"; BELOW: "SUBMERGED PALM"

Art flows with the Myakka

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CORRESPONDENT

The visual beauty of natural bodies of water has been a preoccupation of artists since the Renaissance. Throughout, the central interest has been the poetics of wind patterns, cloud reflections and foliage upon the surface of the water. For this reason, 19th-century Realist and Romantic painters and contemporary Photorealist and Neo-Expressionist painters and photographers have continually recorded the beauty of our waterways.

"Myakka Series: New Work" at The Studio at Gulf and Pine on Anna Maria Island features the oil paintings and color photography of Old Myakka City resident Jean Blackburn. The exhibit is another installment in the ongoing love affair the artist has with a stretch of the Myakka River upstream from the park near her home. Blackburn will often refer to the river as her "muse." Over the years this relationship has produced several thousand richly colored photographs and 114 oil paintings. A selection of her most recent work in both media is the focus of the current exhibit.



[VISUAL ARTS]

Jean Blackburn's "Myakka Series: New Work"

On view through March 31 at The Studio at Gulf and Pine, 10101 Gulf Drive, Anna Maria Island. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Call 778-1906.

Stylistically, Blackburn works in the tradition of Photorealism modified by an interest in biomorphic pattern-

making. This preoccupation brings out her sensitivity to the color gradations created by the intensity and angle of the light upon the quartz sand bottom of the river, the shapes of fallen sabal palms viewed through tannin-stained water and the special distortions created by objects either embedded in the bottom of the river or floating through it.

The daughter of two educators who were also naturalists, Blackburn initially considered careers in veterinary medicine or marine biology. Instead, she has combined those interests in her art.

Today the artist can be found out in the river in her hip waders, camera in hand, making photographs for exhibition or source material for her paintings. Each excursion is different depending on the depth of the river which can change "from inaccessible flood stage to dry desert sand while my back is turned," she says.

In this new work, the degree of abstraction has increased without loss of truth to her source. It is to everyone's benefit that her source never dries completely away.