

April Exhibition:



Audrey Phillips

Finding the Light

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 2, 4 – 7 pm
Exhibition Dates: April 2-30, 2011

Gallery Talks: Friday, April 29 @ 11am

Free and open to the public

Finding the Light, a solo exhibition of the work of Audrey Phillips, opens at Arts on Douglas Fine Art and Collectibles in the downtown arts district of New Smyrna Beach on Saturday, April 2, from 4-7 p.m. The show runs through April 30, with an artist's talk on Friday, April 29 at 11 a.m.

During the 1960s and early '70s, Phillips grew up in the Florida Panhandle, where her family fished in the crystal-clear waters and combed the pristine beaches of pure white sand. "Three miles offshore, where the shoreline was no longer visible, you could see straight down to the ocean floor through 25 feet of turquoise water," she recalls.

Since that time, she has had a full life that has included many unexpected turns. Ten years ago, Phillips began painting as a way to heal the deep grief she experienced following the tragic murder of her mother in Panama City. The compelling story of her path toward healing through art drew the attention of *AARP*, which featured Phillips in its recent film *Inner Genius* as well as an article in the September/October 2010 issue of *AARP Magazine*.

Last April, Phillips was flown to New York City for the making of the film *Inner Genius*. During this exciting time, the tragedy of the Gulf Oil Spill hit the media. Her shock grew as she slowly realized that the beaches and waters she remembered as places of beauty and respite would be blackened by gallons of oil spewing up, out of control, from the ocean's floor.

When she returned home to Florida, Phillips began expressing her feelings about the Gulf through art, finding initial inspiration in a piece of decorative paper she had picked up as a souvenir in New York. "The paper's swirling design represented interconnectedness to me," she recalls. Soon, she began to see a correlation between the swirling motif and the ravaging oil spill.

Her first few abstract paintings were filled with light and color—inspirations of her fond family memories on the Gulf. But not long after this, she found herself reflecting on the darkness of the new situation in the Gulf waters. She was attracted to the intricate details of engraved depictions of sea life by Albertus Seba from the 1700s. The work of Ernst Haeckel, a naturalist and artist who depicted thousands of species in the late 1800s, also drew her attention. The otherworldly, almost abstract quality of the images fueled her work as she dwelled on the black curtain of oil slowly covering precious sea life.

As I created these pieces, I took the perspective of a small organism in the Gulf, looking up through the waters towards the sky. I imagined that the influx of oil must look like a storm coming ashore, with an eerie darkness slowly setting in. The threat of the oil stirred a protective spirit in me.

To give voice to this in her work, Phillips created mixed-media pieces that integrate parts of illustrations. These arrestingly beautiful dark-and-light pieces express her awareness of the fragility of nature and our need to protect it.

As this body of work progressed for the upcoming solo exhibition, Phillips became more hopeful as she thought of "nature's innate intelligence and its ability to heal." Following this lead, her paintings moved beyond the subject of trauma to the more universal themes of spirituality and healing in the lives of human beings. *Finding the Light*, a large 72 x 36-inch painting incorporating both light and dark forms, reflects Phillips' personal transcendence as well as the perceived duality and richness inherent in all life.