

Soaking Up The Scenery



"Gulf Coast Gold" by Ashton Howard, 20 x 40 inches, acrylic on canvas

Tropical Art
Remains a
Consistent Seller
in the Art World.

When thinking about tropical destinations, many people can relate to the scenery shown in those popular Corona beer commercials—clear water, white sand beaches, a delightful breeze, sunshine, blue skies and crashing waves. Although some people take home a bottle of sand or some seashells in remembrance of their trips to paradise, art lovers seek something more. They want a painting that brings back those same sensory memories.

"People are looking for art that means something to them, and tropical art offers something to collectors," says Anne Wood, director of Tabora Gallery, a Hawaii-based gallery featuring more than 20 artists including its namesake, Roy Tabora. "Plus,

people don't want gloomy art; they want fun, bright, colorful images, which tropical art offers to them."

The affordability and accessibility of tropical art makes it a consistent seller in the art world, particularly in popular tourist destinations such as Hawaii, Southern California or coastal Florida. Prominent and up-and-coming artists are responding to the demand with imagery mostly inspired from personal experiences; some are even using unconventional techniques and mediums to attract new business. The result: Art buyers have more options than ever.

"Tropical art still sells in a recession because people have that connection to it

that reminds them of a particular vacation," says Steve Quartly, a still-life impressionistic artist who resides in Orange County, Calif., just a short drive from the Pacific Ocean. "You have to have paintings that capture people's emotions."

The future for tropical art, experts say, remains as bright as the imagery frequently depicted in the paintings.

"Tropical art is going to be more popular as we get busier in this world," says Steve Barton, a San Diego-based artist who invented the "Wavy Frame" concept to create a sense of movement in his tropical paintings. "We want to be able to escape more often, especially to warm climates. As time goes on, it is going to be easier and easier to travel to Bali and other remote, beautiful locations."

Here, we explore the latest trends and sales techniques in tropical art, as well as additional insights by prominent artists and gallery owners.

TREND WATCH

The following four tropical-art trends have moved to the forefront with buyers:

1. EMBRACING BRIGHT COLORS:

"There's enough darkness and strife in the world, and so when people buy art, they want it to say something positive and uplifting," says Scott Westmoreland, a southern California-based artist known for his colorful paintings depicting woody cars, surfing and other tropical imagery.

2. THINKING BEYOND CANVAS:

Today's artists are embracing various substrates like glass and bamboo for their tropical paintings. For instance, artist Walfrido paints on Hawaiian Koa wood in an attempt to blend traditional oil paintings with the warmth of wood.

"If you have something unique in materials or presentation, you're going to stand out," he says.



"Afternoon Retreat" by Irene Sheri, 30 x 32 inches, hand-embellished giclée on canvas (Collectors Editions)



"Waiting" by Pete Tillack, 16 x 16 inches, acrylic on canvas



"Serenade In A Major" by Bogdan Miscevic, 24 x 36 inches, acrylic on masonite

"Tropical art lends itself to where we want to be. We love the idea of sitting under a palm tree and being in that relaxed state of mind. It's like a mini-vacation on the wall."
— Steve Barton, artist

BY GABRIEL KILEY • ABN CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

TROPICAL ART

"As time marches on, I think tropical art will become known as a preservation genre. The art will be more about preserving memories of unspoiled parts of this world. Someone might paint tropical images and reflect on the way it looked at the time before development took over."

— Scott Westmoreland, artist

Artist Ashton Howard explains further: "I've seen a lot of diverse materials being used lately—paintings on salvaged wood, distressed metal and other interesting surfaces beyond the traditional canvas. I've been painting on wood and experimenting with different ways to mount each painting. We will see more exploration in



"Summer's Gold" by Roy Tabora, 24 inches round, limited edition giclée (Tabora Gallery)

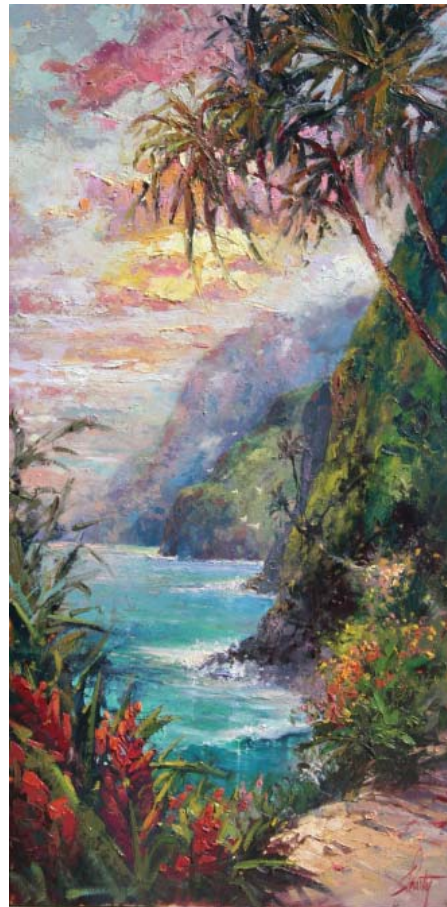
the use of different materials that inspire the root of our ideas and continue to develop the basis of our subjects."

3. BEING NOSTALGIC: Many artists are harkening back to the old days by painting vintage signage and portraying popular tropical locations before development dotted the once-unspoiled landscape.

4. PROMOTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANGLE: Some artists say that today's heightened environmental awareness in society is playing a role in the ongoing interest in tropical art. Others are using eco-friendly products and practices with



"Warm Tropical Waters" by Wyland ©2000, 50 x 30 inches, oil on canvas



"Escape to Paradise" by Steve Quartly, 24 x 48 inches, oil on canvas

Tabora gallery

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their artwork. Howard says he is exploring the use of different materials and recycled products. “And my printer in California, Marco Fine Arts, produces our prints with 100 percent water-based inks and coatings,” he says.

MAKING THE SALES

It’s one thing to have eye-catching artwork; it’s another thing to make sales. Here, artists and gallery owners share their advice on selling tropical art.

1. REFLECT YOUR SURROUNDINGS:

Make sure the tropical art is reflective of the community. “Paint what you know. For instance, area artists, and those of South Florida, know tropical vegetation,” says Clare Pearson Zipperly, co-owner of Fifth Avenue Art Gallery in Melbourne, Fla., just 40 miles south of Cape Canaveral near the

Atlantic Ocean. “Most people who live in our area want their artwork to reflect their environment, and since tropical plants are in our environment, the artwork of choice for homes in this environment reflects the tropical flora.”

2. AFFORDABILITY IS KEY: “If you’re not offering financing at your gallery, you’re missing the boat,” Wood says. “Financing should be a major payment option for galleries to offer to their customers. We’re located in a tourist destination, and for a customer who has already spent lots of money on their vacation, they probably don’t have the money right away to buy a piece of art. Wood adds, “People rather spend money on one expensive piece instead of small, less expensive items. People are spending money with more thought nowadays.”

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Walfrido holds his painting titled “Sunset Palm,” which is framed in Hawaiian Koa wood.



“On the Reef” by Renee Decator, 36 x 36 inches, acrylic on canvas (Fifth Avenue Art Gallery)

“Hawaiian Dream” by James Coleman, 36 x 24 inches, oil on canvas

“When people travel, they want to bring something back from where they’ve been and surround their homes with objects of beauty as a way to get away from the work week and reality.”

— Walfrido, artist

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“People like tropical imagery because of what it does to their self-esteem or morale. Recently, I had a customer tell me how much the two Tabora paintings she bought from us make her feel so good every day.”

— Anne Wood, director, Tabora Gallery

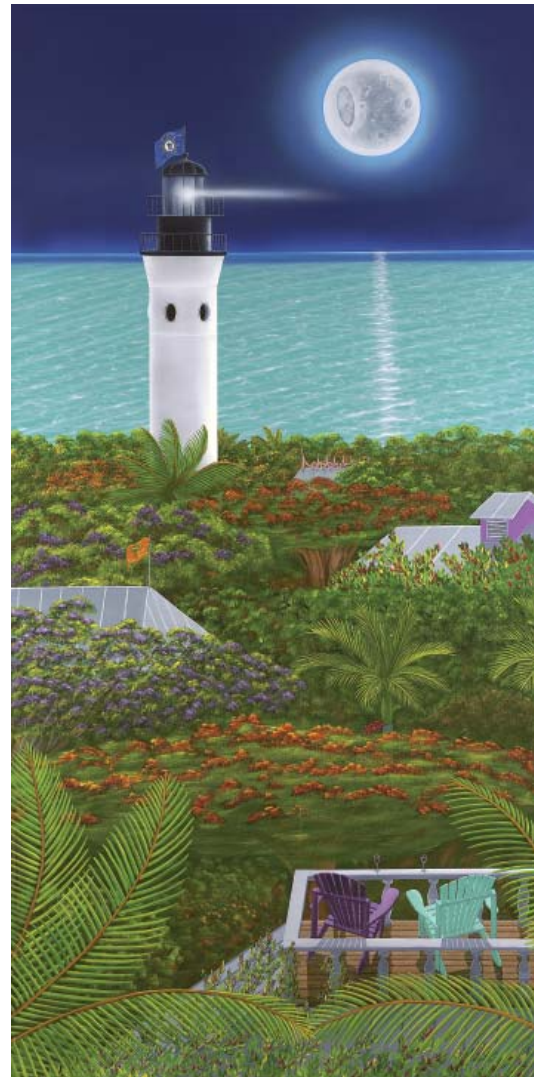


“One Particular Harbor” by Patrick Reid O’Brien, 22 x 28 inches, mixed media

3. LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS: “Usually, tropical artwork sells itself, but if there’s any advice I could give any gallery owner, it would be to pay attention to the client,” Zipperly says. “Notice which pieces they are most interested in, and tell them more about the artist who produced it. Most patrons desire to know more about the artist and their story. They want to know if the artist is local and if this is their primary medium. If you know the story of the painting, that can sometimes cinch the deal. Art is a personal interpretation, and sometimes the client will take their interpretation and not want to know anything more about the painting, but want to know about the artist.”

4. SHARE YOUR PASSION: Artists need to develop strong relationships with art consultants and customers to make sure their passion is communicated to potential buyers.

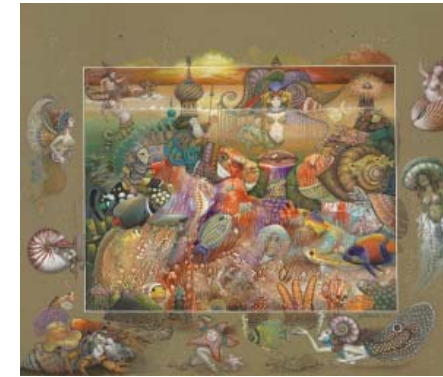
“My interest in the ocean has definitely helped me,” Quartly says. “There’s a passion that goes into painting a seascape,



“A Key West Fantasy” by Dan Mackin, 20 x 40 inches, giclée on canvas (Solar Publishing)

and I think that relates to the buyer. If you’re passionate about what you’re painting, the buyer will feel that, and they will have a connection to the painting.”

5. GET INVOLVED: “I would open a gallery locally in my town and get involved in the community as much as possible,” Howard says. “I think hosting events that have a communal benefit are important. I have developed a series of paintings entitled, ‘Gulf Coast Waves,’ a series representing the landscapes of the Gulf Coast, and I would offer a percentage of sales to certain environmental groups here locally on each sale.”



“High Tide Magic” by Bogdan Miscevic, 16½ x 19½ inches, acrylic on paper



“Hawaiian Winter” by Heather Brown, 24 x 30 inches, acrylic on canvas

“Fish Tales” by Steve Barton, 14 x 34 inches, giclée on wavy canvas



“Beckoning Palms” by Scott Westmoreland, 30 x 40 inches, acrylic on canvas (Greg Young Publishing)



“Silhouette Bay” by Pete Tillack, 24 x 36 inches, oil on canvas



“New Tsunami” by David Wight, glass sculpture

6. LOCATION IS IMPORTANT: Tabora Gallery has four locations, including two inside Hilton hotels. “You have to be front and center to tourists,” says Wood, who states that tourists account for about 95 percent of the gallery sales.

7. HIRE QUALITY SALES PEOPLE: “Even in a busy location, having the wrong sales people can cost you,” Wood says.

8. THROW A PARTY: It’s easy to build a theme around tropical art for a gallery event to lure new and old customers. “You see a lot of event-like atmospheres at galleries, and I like to see more of that,” Westmoreland says. **ABN**

“Tropical art will never go out of style. Each day is new, and I am inspired every day to create something different and exciting. I think we will see some amazing new artists and exciting twists on the traditional tropical landscape.”

— Ashton Howard, artist