

KEYS LIFE

THE KEY WEST CITIZEN ♦ SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2004

FOOD COLUMNIST TEMPTS US
WITH THE JOY OF KEY WEST SHRIMP, 3C

Northrop

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University. "The process of sealing each layer with epoxy and acetate is unforgiving, so I had to know where I was going. It's different from work I've done as an intuitive artist, letting the canvas suggest the next move."

Two of Northrop's smaller works from "Beyond the Knife" will be included in the December 8 Orchids and Art Auction at Key West Heritage House Museum. Viewing, and a silent auction, starts at 5:30 p.m. The live auction begins at 6.

For more information, call 294-9677.

Beyond the knife



Kim
Northrop's
art shown
at Gallery
on Greene

BY BARBARA BOWERS
Special to The Citizen

"In the beginning was the Word," . . . and in Kimberly Northrop's capable hands, the word quickly turns into a statement. Her statement may not become Gospel according to St. John; nevertheless, Northrop manipulates and massages her words, usually in the form of a poem, into a vision.

"Most of my paintings start with my poems, which is where I get my strong visuals," said Northrop, an artist and poet whose new show, "Beyond the Knife," opens Dec. 11 at Gallery on Greene. "With words and mixed media, I create a visual space that people can get into like a dream or a memory. While each painting means something to me — it can even be about me — there's plenty of room for the viewer to interpret my ideas."

Northrop, who formerly lived in Key West, mounted several successful one-woman shows there, and taught painting at the Florida Keys Community College. During her eight year island stay, Northrop's use of text in her collages was on the cutting edge of art in a town where realism and folksy styles had dominated the art scene. She won a \$15,000 grant from the South Florida Consortium for the Arts in 1997, but in 1998, she made a career shift to San Francisco to oversee a branch of Women.com, a computer business that ultimately took her to Sarasota, Florida in 2001 to work as an executive and consultant.

"When the dot.com bubble

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dent. However, in "Beyond the Knife," Northrop gives up the tight control she has held with previous artistic messages, and creates a visual that people can relate to in their own way. In effect, she leaves more for the viewer to interpret.

"I let myself do things that were pretty, and visually fun," said the artist. "My work is always about ideas, but it has to have visual appeal. Text, which can become comic in some artists' works, has to be integrated in mine."

The integration of Northrop's original poems is visual as well as mental. Her words are never borrowed, and sometimes her entire poem is included in the finished piece, as with "Bottle Dreams." In it, a photo of multi-colored bottles and painted white roses serve as the background for a romantic ode that ends with "I see my heart, lily-white in your hands."

Sometimes just fragments of a poem get the idea across. "The Visible Spectrum" is an example that only contains the words "I see you as a bat sees midnight." But the moss

popped, I was laid off and left without a self-title because when I made the career shift, I didn't have much time for my art," said Northrop. "Basically, I had to start over in Sarasota, and get back to my artistic roots. 'Beyond the Knife' is about moving on; about getting past hurt, past pain that's worse than a knife cut. At the very least, it's about cutting the umbilical cord and nostalgia of the past."

The new series of paintings has a different voice from Northrop's former work, although her signature layering of idea upon idea is still evi-

covered bark of the background photo combined with a thickly painted blue maze very subtly leads the viewer into the work where he might find things he didn't expect, or where he might feel lost.

Although it isn't always apparent, influences from other writers and artists are also integrated into Northrop's messages. For instance, in "The White Knight" Northrop creates a vision she saw while reading William Vollman's book, "The Rainbow Stories." And the culture of consumption is a thread that runs throughout Northrop's work. In this



TOP: "Bottle Dreams." ABOVE: "Escaping Flatland."

particular series, "Your Victimless Lies" touts a fork, spoon and knife that take consumption well beyond eating. This is the most painterly of the 18 pieces in the show, and while the image is simple, the text and overall visual is loaded with implications that ordinary objects are really something else.

A blatant shift from Northrop's past exhibitions is the size and high gloss reflections, which are especially suited to her multi-dimensional thinking. The pieces are large, 12 inches by 36, and the slick surfaces of the new work cause the viewer to feel like he's

looking through layers of ice. At least four layers of images, paint, epoxy and acetate on each piece create a subtle, but distinct depth of vision. The viewer, who foregoes the initial chilly sensation of being pushed away, will be greatly rewarded if he spends time exploring this frozen tundra of Northrop's mind.

"The technique is less like painting and more like print-making, or maybe, building a ceramic pot then glazing it," said Northrop, who has an MFA in print making from Ohio State

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