



Doreen's Turtle



Joe's Hope Town

The fish artista

By Andy Lindstrom

A successful career woman with a master's degree in business administration and her own State Farm insurance agency, Kim Rody was attending a seminar in Chicago on how to make even more money when the discussion leader posed the question that changed her life.

"He asked us to imagine where we wanted to be when we were older," Rody said from her Stuart home. "And I got this instant image of a bungalow on a beach in South Florida or the Bahamas, with me tending a garden and painting. 'Paint?' I said to myself. 'Where did that come from?' I never dreamed I could do that for a living. But I gave myself five years to see if I could make it as an artist. And now, here I am."

"The fish artista," as she calls herself, Rody has indeed come a long way from selling insurance to painting marine life, seascapes, the tropics and whatever else catches her eye in a DayGlo style she described as "kind of impressionistic but not exactly. Sort of pointillism



Louanne's Coconut Tree



Blue-Striped Grunts



Big Damsel

like (French neoimpressionist Georges) Seurat, but bigger. Much bigger, so the images don't really become clear until you step way back."

Descriptions of Rody's acrylic on canvas images include such words as dramatic, colorful and vibrant to describe her fanciful, super-size work such as a larger-than-life sailfish that measures almost nine feet from scissor tail to sword-shaped jaw. She attributes her fondness for bright colors to a love for the often gaudy marine creatures she visits on scuba and snorkeling trips to Bahama's Abaco Islands. "I'm attracted to colorful reef fish," she said. "They're a lot more fun to paint than deep-water types that are mostly just shades of blue or grey."

Among her many past endeavors, Rody spent several

years as a certified PADI dive master at Lake Travis outside Austin, Texas. That came while she was earning her MBA at Texas A&M University. After her art epiphany, she began to take lessons from a wise instructor in Dallas who advised her to find her own artistic style rather than to paint by the book. And that's when she got hooked on fish.

"I was very well heeled, won a lot of (sales) contests and went all over the world," she said of her former persona. "But I had to sell insurance. So when I found that I had the talent to make a living painting the things I love, the switch wasn't that hard."

Born and raised in the Miami area, with a dad who took her fishing and diving on a regular basis out of Key Largo, Rody was groomed early on to



Pelicans

what she called “the whole salt-water thing.”

Her art career actually got its start in Dallas, although its market for colorful saltwater scenes quickly proved less than profitable. Eventually, she found her niche at Marsh Harbor in the Abacos, selling “a whole bunch of stuff” to well-heeled tourists looking for souvenirs and second-home owners who wanted to decorate with a tropical twist.

“I used to drive back and forth from Dallas with my Explorer stuffed with paintings, then rent a boat or take a ferry from the mainland,” she said. “After the second or third time, I asked myself why I lived in Texas. So, four years ago, I moved to Stuart.”

Rody’s paintings – the acrylic brushed into swirling textures

to create water movement, coral and underwater plants – now sell in shops, restaurants and galleries from Palm Beach to the Keys and throughout the Bahamas. Last year, she built a two-story garage with an upstairs workroom, but she still paints in her house, usually at night and often from digital photos that she takes herself.

As for her piscatorial subject matter, “First I paint ‘em, and then I eat ‘em,” she said with a laugh. “A friend and I just bought a 31-foot Sierra powerboat that we take back and forth to a mooring in Hopetown (Abacos) for diving and to deliver more pictures. It’s a pretty good life.”

To make sure her new life remains both profitable and good, Rody also exhibits her work at about a half dozen art shows each year including the

Abaco Art Festival and Treasure Cay Art Show. In April and December she shows at home to what she called “private collectors and people with big walls.”

Not long ago, Rody took home a first-place ribbon from Martin County’s first-ever juried art show. Her sailfish – that really big one that didn’t get away – was chosen as official logo for Stuart’s popular art fest. She also finds time to donate works for charities such as the Treasure Coast Wildlife Center and Helping People Succeed.

“Every day is Saturday for me,” she told an interviewer from *Crossings Magazine*. “I like to paint on Saturday.”

For more on Rody and her paintings, click on the Web site www.fishartista.com. Her studio is in Stuart and her phone number is (772) 341-6566. **FW**