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Local Color

Florida-based watercolorist Kathleen Maling paints the wildlife found around her home.



St. Augustine, Florida, artist Kathleen Maling has been interested in art since she was a young girl living in New Jersey. It wasn't until about 25 years ago, however, that she began her foray into becoming a professional artist. To hone her craft she took classes with artists she admired in Miami, where she lived at the time, and then did studies at the local community college. Eventually, Maling began participating in exhibitions and teaching classes of her own.

Primarily working as a watercolorist, Maling has found the medium to be

challenging and rewarding. "I just love watercolor. I love how it acts and how it's unpredictable and how it flows together," Maling says. "I like the fact that when you put it down, it's pretty much done. There's not a lot of room for error, which makes it kind of fun."

Seen on her canvases are the animals, people and landscapes she encounters while living in St. Augustine. A major influence on her artwork has been the Florida paintings of Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent, including the latter's alligator works. Maling has done her own

series of the animal, finding inspiration right in her own neighborhood.

"I do a lot of kayaking. Where I live has beautiful kayaking trails, and I'm always running into alligators," Maling says. "Sometimes I'm very lucky to get shots of them on the muddy banks, but there's a zoo right on the street where I live, just a few miles down the road, that has a lot of alligators. I get a lot of photographs from there."

Using her photographs as reference for her pieces, Maling is always looking for a strong composition and takes into account how the alligators are situated and how she



1
3 Gators, watercolor,
22 x 30"

2
Swamp Dragon,
watercolor, 22 x 30"

3
Alligator, watercolor,
30 x 22"

4
St. Augustine, Florida-
based watercolorist
Kathleen Maling.



can crop the photos into new arrangements. She also enjoys exaggerating the color of the animals, as they tend to be more gray and brown, and she concentrates on the light and shadows.

"What strikes me the most about [alligators] are the intricate patterns that, when the sunlight hits them, light up," Maling says. "Those patterns always amaze me. They're like puzzle pieces, their scales. Depending on the way the light hits them, certain areas will be lit up and others will be shadowed...I'll spend hours just taking photographs of them and looking through the photos and cropping them, really observing the play of light."

Looking toward the future, Maling, who is a member of the American Watercolor Society, National Watercolor Society, and the Florida Watercolor Society, says she hopes to "paint more people, but wildlife seems to be my favorite. Anything with nature is my big love. I'll probably continue that...I like being outdoors. I like the environment. The most inspiring thing to me is nature and wildlife." ●

Maling was the Second Prize Winner of International Artist magazine's Challenge No. 91, Wildlife.

