

# Touched By the Artist's Hand

By Sue Israel

*I changed my style from painting what I see to painting what I feel.—Sarah Griffith*

A visit to the home of Sarah and Gilbert Griffith in the Country Club of Louisiana offers more than a view of their lovely French style home with its beautiful antiques and rich décor. It offers a glance into Sarah's creative soul.

Having retired as an educator after 30 years in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System and after serving another two years as principal of a private school in Ascension Parish, Sarah decided to pursue art as a hobby during her newfound free time. She enjoyed painting the typical landscapes and still lifes, though her pursuit of perfection in replicating her subjects sometimes left her dissatisfied with her work.

It was a trip to New Mexico with her good friend and fellow artist, Rhea Gary, about five years ago that changed Sarah as an artist forever. "When I came back from that trip, I changed my style from painting what I see to painting what I feel," said Sarah. "That's when my whole focus changed. It wasn't too long after that when people started wanting to buy my work."

That profound change in her creativity and artistic technique transformed Sarah into a successful contemporary artist. Her bright, dramatic paintings can be found gracing the walls of many beautiful homes in south Louisiana and beyond. Sarah shows locally as well as in Grayton Beach, Florida, but people come to her home from all over the country to view and purchase her paintings.

Sarah's creativity and style are evident throughout the 5,400-square-foot, two-story home. "I wanted to make it comfortable and livable for our family and the way we live," said Sarah. "We like to relax and entertain, but we're not very fancy."

And Sarah's contemporary artwork creates a dramatic backdrop for her French antiques and elegant but comfortable décor. "A lot of people come into our home and suddenly realize that contemporary art can easily be mixed with French antiques," explained Sarah. "Contemporary art is not exclusive to contemporary décor. I don't even have any contemporary furniture."

What Sarah does have is a beloved collection of furnishings that she and Gilbert, a veterinarian with a long-time practice in Ascension Parish, have accumulated during their 16 years of marriage. Sarah and Gilbert knew each other as youngsters, grew up in the same neighborhood, even dated a little in high school and college, but each ended up marrying someone else. Some years later after both divorced, they found their way back to each other, married, and formed a happy blended family. Each had two children from their first marriage—all grown now and on their own. And several years ago, Sarah and Gilbert opened their hearts and their home when they adopted a one-year-old boy, Wesley (now five).

