Anne Logan: Living and breathing art

by Steve Dugas

The sun hangs low in the sky over the late-afternoon horizon, and Landry's Seafood Restaurant in Breaux Bridge drifts in limbo between too-late-for-lunch and not-quite-dinner, finally giving Artist-in-Residence Anne Logan the opportunity to escape from the art gallery to the bar for a smoke.

"Sometimes, I'll go hours in the gallery not smoking at all; so, I tend to make up for lost time when I come out. Bad habit, I know," Logan, 56, laughingly admitted. "If I have to borrow one from my husband, and it's not a menthol, it's like smoking my thumb. I really should quit."

She only makes it half-way through the cigarette, though, as she spies a curious couple speaking in hushed tones and eyeing their way toward her gallery—the sign of a potential customer.

And although she neither owns the gallery, nor is hers the only art on display, the voluminous amount of her work available in original or print is testament to her reign as queen. What sets her work apart from others is the staggering diversity embodied in her portfolio.

"I'm always torn between painting what I want, and then trying to think of how the public is going to judge it," said Logan, returning to the bar after handling the middle-aged couple several brochures. "Sometimes, I paint what I have to so I can paint what I want to. I do find an audience for those, and every time I do, it's like finding a kindred spirit. It's neat, because they get it."

The soft, impressionistic scenes of young women in flowing, virginal-white dresses exploring flower-filled meadows stand in sharp contrast to the almost-Day-Glo colored fairies and nymphs riding gigantically small animals like a frog, a bird and a seahorse. The schizophrenic style is easily explained in her past, a blend of a happy childhood in rural Louisiana and an art education earned in the late '60s.

"I had really good memories of growing up where I did; it was considered the country at that time," said Logan, speaking of an area of land in Lafayette off the Breaux Bridge highway. "It was a mixed neighborhood. Everybody kind of knew each other. Lafayette was a lot smaller."

Her father, Paul, emigrated from Germany at the age of seven, bringing with him the strong work ethics that would allow him to open his own car dealership, Schoeffler Cadillac. Although his parents spoke only German, Logan said it was important to her father to assimilate the American and Cajun cultures.

"Dad was wanting to be American. He was proud of learning English, and he loved this area, too," said Logan.

Cajun culture came from her mother, Lydia Daigle, a school teacher who supplied the sense of French romance Logan said molded her into "an incurable, hard-headed romantic."

"Mom loved flowers, and the yard was filled with dogwoods, redbuds, azaleas," said Logan. "To me, it was all a fairy land. Most of my 'Hannah' series is ladies and little girls walking through fields and kind of doing what I did growing up, just exploring the outside."

I was a little bit of a tom boy, always wanting to go fishing with dad and my brothers. I loved just being out on the water. One of my brothers really liked to come out here during the day, even when the fish weren't biting. To me, that was a fairy land and part of my inspiration for going into the fantasy."

The youngest of seven, Logan playfully admitted to exploiting her status as the youngest.

"I love being the baby, an old baby, but still," said Logan. "I play it out for all it's worth."

Her brothers, Harold, Charles, Bob and Fritz, who passed away in 2000, who were three business majors and an architect, her sister, Elizabeth, an education major, and her much older and already successful half-siblings, Johanna (a former German translator for Gulf Oil) and "Little" Paul, who still answers to the moniker at 70, only added to the pressure from her father to earn a college degree.

"(My father) insisted that we get an education because he had to quit school at a young age," said Logan. "It was definitely an influence on us, and we all got our degrees. My hardest thing I had to do was to decide what to major in."

During her first attempt at college in '68, she dabbed in psychology, because, according to her, she was looking for a stable career. With her passion obviously lying elsewhere, Logan abandoned psychology permanently and college temporarily, taking time to marry her first husband, Patrick Logan, before returning to then-USL in 1975 to earn her bachelor's degree in fine arts. She and Logan had one son, Brian.

"I enjoyed it so much; I was sorry to graduate," Logan nostalgically lamented. "The staff and the teachers that were there at the time I was an advertising major were a really great group of instructors."

Part of what Logan said she

Continued on page 13
Artist Anne Logan works on her latest fantasy-filled painting. Logan is the artist-in-residence at Landry’s Seafood Restaurant in Breaux Bridge. (BNP/Steve Dugas Photo)

loved about college was the change in atmosphere from her sheltered life in rural Lafayette, a culture shock she experienced on her first day of school.

“I’m trying to be prim and proper, because before that, when my sister was there in ’65, in some of the courses like secretarial science, they had to wear dresses and couldn’t wear flip-flops,” said Logan. “I look around and everybody is wearing jeans, and they’re dressing down, and then I get into my art courses. I loved it. The more you dressed down, the better it was. It was a good indicator of the change of atmosphere.”

Pausing to light another cigarette, she explained that both she and her current husband, Rick, whom she married in ’92, are planning on quitting, because of their advancing ages.

With a fine arts degree in hand, Logan set out to spread her name in the art world by reaching for the peak right away.

“I told my sister, ‘I’m going to get in a gallery in New Orleans,’ too dumb to know that it’s not always that easy, but I lucked out,” said Logan. “The first gallery I went to took my work, raised my prices and started selling paintings for me.”

That gallery, Myown Gallery, held her work for four years, until it closed, and sent Logan down a four-year road of rejection.

“When she closed, I said, ‘Well, I’ll just get in another gallery,’” Logan said. “Four years of knocking on doors, and the gallery that ended up taking my work had turned it down four years earlier. You never know what a gallery’s needs are going to be.”

She would eventually find asylum at Don’s Seafood Downtown, which bought 10 of her paintings to hang in the dining rooms. She then opened her own studio in downtown Lafayette in 1986, but was forced to close it in 1991, after several years of dealing with the after-effects of an oilfield slump.

“It was getting to be a drain,” Logan admitted, “and I never wanted this love of painting to end up being a drain. If I had to, I’d have gone and done something else, but I was trying to keep my career, keep doing what I was trained to do, paint.”

Luckily, in 2001, her paintings hanging at Don’s caught the attention of another restaurant with a love of fine art, Landry’s.

“When they first asked me to come work in this gallery, I told Gerald, ‘I’m not a salesperson.’ He said, ‘Anne, I’d like an artist in there. You know about art, and you like people.’ The first two weeks that I was here, I knew that I had gotten into something I was really going to enjoy.”

Besides her “Hannah” series and her “Fly By Night” series, with it’s fantastical fairies and animals, Logan said she still felt the need to work completely outside of what’s expected of her, an opportunity she found in the gallery’s mascot, Pedro.

Pedro, whose full name is Pedro Boudreaux, is an old Halloween skeleton with clothes and a mask that Logan says looks eerily similar to Cheech Marin from “Cheech and Chong.”

“Rick said, ‘Anne, Pedro could have his own line of paintings.’ I said, ‘Yes, and Pedro can paint anything he wants.’ So that’s what I’m doing,” Logan explained. “I’ve started a line of Pedro paintings, and I sign them Pedro, and then real small underneath I put ‘aka Logan.’”

As Logan extinguished her final cigarette, eager to get back to her next painting—a trio of sultry rabbits donned in Arabian-harem splendor—she leaned in to ensure her advice to the young generation of artists was received.

“I always tell young artists, don’t be discouraged if the first five doors don’t let you in,” said Logan. “It doesn’t mean that your work isn’t good. All galleries have different criteria; so, you kind of have to stick with it and develop a thick skin.”