

tampabay.com Know it now.

Opposites naturally attract

LaRita Jacobs, Times Staff Writer

Published Tuesday, May 13, 2008

The Gulf Coast Museum of Art's newest exhibition offers a unique view of natural Florida from three artists with very different painting styles.

Jeff O'Kelley, the museum's marketing and communications manager, says the show, titled "A Mysterious Clarity," demonstrates how opposites can attract.

"The works don't seem to have a lot in common, but when they're put with each other, it creates a great visual effect," O'Kelley said.

The artists, Lilian Garcia-Roig, Ray Burggraf and Mark Messersmith, are art professors at Florida State University and have long admired one another's work.

Their collaborative show premiered in 2004 and has been seen in galleries across the region.

But the show's unique style, where pictures from the different artists are mingled, came together almost by accident, Garcia-Roig said.

"When we were hanging the first show, we discovered that when we displayed our work together, it enhanced our work," said Garcia-Roig.

"We use different mediums and different applications and create different products, yet the combination draws people in."

Garcia-Roig paints her landscapes in forests and creates majestic, large-scale canvases. Burggraf's work is created on wood boards with a modern, sculptural effect, while Messersmith is known for detailed images that combine reality and myth.

A reception and artists talk is scheduled for tonight. The exhibit opens to the public Saturday.

"It's wonderful to feature these acclaimed artists," said Stephanie Mayer Heydt, museum curator. "The fact that they live here in Florida coincides with the roots and mission of the museum."

Some of the paintings were specifically created for the Gulf Coast Museum show. The large gallery space lends itself to examination of the works from different perspectives.

"There's a different 'wow' factor when you compare them from a distance to what you see up close," Garcia-Roig said.

Heydt agreed.

"Some of the works make you want to take a deep breath, while others make you want to hold your breath," she said.

"It's a beautiful show."