



JOSEPH P. RILEY, JR.
MAYOR

City of Charleston
South Carolina

BARBARA W. VAUGHN
DIRECTOR
PUBLIC INFORMATION

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**THE CITY OF CHARLESTON OFFICE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS PRESENTS
LET OUR VOICES EMERGE - PAINTINGS BY OLGA STAMATIOU
AN EXHIBITION AT THE CITY GALLERY AT WATERFRONT PARK**

Charleston, S.C. – The City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs presents *Let Our Voices Emerge* – a show of oil paintings by artist Olga Stamatiou, curated by Maureen Morrisette. This exhibit will be displayed at the City Gallery at Waterfront Park from March 23, 2013 until April 28, 2013. The opening reception is from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 23, 2013. Ms. Stamatiou will host a lecture at the gallery April 14th at 3 p.m. Dr. Helen Delfeld, assistant professor at the College of Charleston, will give a lecture on gender issues at the gallery April 7, 2013 at 3 p.m. The exhibition, opening reception, and lectures are all free and open to the public.

Let Our Voices Emerge combines oil paintings by Olga Stamatiou with a curated selection of videos from the Women’s Voices Now Film Festival to create an exhibit that examines women’s rights and self-expression. Utilizing thought-provoking imagery and strong symbols, Stamatiou uses art to convey a message about women’s invisibility worldwide.

Inspired by demonstrations in Egypt’s Tahir Square and the efforts of oppressed women to gain civil rights, Ms. Stamatiou depicts women in various stages and types of *hijab*, a veil which is most commonly worn by Muslim women as a symbol of modesty, privacy, and morality. “Stamatiou emphasizes that her women are not victims,” says curator Maureen Morrisette, “Instead, they are metaphors for the universal struggle to be seen and heard...When united by cloth and common action, as demonstrated in the signature painting, the women surge ahead like soldiers. Their supernaturally lit headscarves imbue them with determination and power.”

Women’s Voices Now Film Festival (WVN) has supplied short films to further illustrate this struggle for self-expression. WVN, based in California, is an organization that believes in the importance of adding new voices to the struggle for social, economic and political equality. The films presented in this exhibition focus on the challenges and solutions faced by women in the global struggle for gender equality.

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About the Artist: Olga Stamatou was born in New York City in 1946. At the age of eighteen, she went to live with relatives in Athens, Greece. It was there, in the vibrant atmosphere of the mid-1960's, that she began her formal art education, studying with the painter Ilias Dekoulakos. She returned to the United States and continued her studies at Boston University's School of Fine Arts, where she received her BFA and MFA degree in painting. She also completed a graduate program in Art Therapy at the Metropolitan College of Boston University. Stamatou lived and exhibited in the U.S. during the next twenty years before returning to Greece in 1997. During the next five years, she had exhibitions in Athens and Nice, France. Now residing in Beaufort, South Carolina with her husband, the artist continues to paint full-time. In 2004, Stamatou started a non-profit company called Seewall Child. With funds raised through making and selling a variety of products, the company builds and installs award-winning, interactive, art displays in crisis centers for children.

The City Gallery at Waterfront Park, owned by the City of Charleston and operated by the City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs, is a tangible resource and reliable venue for displaying the finest contemporary art from local, regional, national and international artists, stimulating discussion and dialogue among audiences. Those who visit the City Gallery at Waterfront Park will be educated, enlightened and inspired by their experiences in this cultural space. The City Gallery provides access to the visual arts for everyone in Charleston, S.C., visitors and residents alike, by offering exhibits that are all admission-free. The City Gallery is located at 34 Prioleau St. in downtown Charleston, S.C., and gallery hours of operation are Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. For more information visit www.citygalleryatwaterfrontpark.com.

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FOR MORE INFO:

Barbara W. Vaughn, Director
Media Relations/Public Information
Phone: (843) 724-3746 Fax: (843) 724-3734
Email: vaughnb@charleston-sc.gov