



# Artist-at-Large

by *Louis St. Lewis*

## **Jane Filer: ARTIST'S ARTIST**

Everyone claims to be an artist nowadays, and I mean EVERYONE. Doctors, lawyers, accountants, plumbers, housewives, all of them seem to think that if on Sunday afternoon they smear some paint around on a canvas or do a watercolor of a duck eating a dandelion that they should be considered an "artist." I recently had the extreme misfortune of stumbling into the local country club on my never-ending search for the perfect mint julep only to have my eyes accosted head-on by an exhibition of club members' "art."

My eyes are still recovering. Most of the work looked to me as if it was made by taking a dead horse and a bale of pine straw, throwing them both through an airplane engine and seeing what came out. I tell you what! I promise to stop telling people that I'm a dentist just because I do a few root canals on the weekend, if y'all will stop claiming to be artists just because you painted a sailboat last year on your Maine holiday.

After the fiasco of the country club art show, I really needed to see some



art by a real artist and the first one that came to mind was none other than Jane Filer. She is a magician and her magic wand is a paintbrush. It was a beautiful sunny day, so I hopped into the "Z," dropped the top and zoomed down Old Greensboro Road to find her. I turned right at the old mailbox and saw a stack of seven or eight old deer skulls lined up in a pyramid, so I knew I must be at the right spot. The one-quarter mile driveway twists and turns through the woods, and from time to time your eye catches a glimpse of part of an old sculpture, a strange mask, more bones. For a moment I felt that I was on the set of *Deliverance*, but as soon as I rounded the corner and came upon Jane's artistic compound the movie *Wizard of Oz* came to mind.

I don't think that Jane would be offended by my saying that she has a little bit of a hippie/earth-mother vibe

going on, and that holds true of her environment as well. Jane and her husband John live in more or less a huge tree house perched on stilts that THEY built from scratch. Every beam has a story, every windowsill filled to capacity with African artifacts, old bones, flowers. Interesting objects and good luck charms are nailed to the front door, cats play on the sofa, wind chimes tease. The house is filled with art; not one corner is without a beautiful painting or object, either by Jane or one of her many artist friends.

Out behind the house, Jane has an open-air studio, a funky converted shed with shady umbrellas, a washing machine for soiled painters frocks and lots of room to sit and talk.

Conveniently, it is right next to the swimming pool that Jane and her husband dug by hand, so after a hard day of painting it's just one giant leap into the cool blue waves. Several of Jane's new paintings, set to be displayed this month at Tyndall Galleries, lounged around the walls in various states of completion. Even the unfinished backgrounds had a startling modernist sophistication (I think she should show some of these on the side). She produces work that is informed with whimsy, wit and the joy of life. She is in demand and has throngs of admirers and collectors just waiting to see what she will come up with next. Jane has even inspired writer Tonya Locke to do a book on her and her art titled *The Darkness*

and the Light, which should be out later this year.

Artists often get bad reputations for being temperamental, bitchy, conceited, rude, inebriated, debauched etc— usually with just cause, but I have never heard one bad word about Jane Filer. All I ever hear is glowing praise. She is an artist who has consistently given back to the community through her generous donations to charitable events. She teaches others, she encourages every artist she knows to be the best they can be, and she has the respect of both the critics and her fellow artists, which is very rare indeed. I don't know if you believe in astrology, but if there is any truth in it at all, then I'm certain you will agree that Jane Filer was born under a very lucky star.

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“Land of the Tree Ballons” 30”x40”  
acrylic on Canvas