



high tide
St. Simons



Winter 2021

**WHERE TO EAT, SHOP, PLAY & STAY
WE KNOW WHERE THE LOCALS GO!**

Cover Artist - Julia Chandler Lawing



Visual poetry: seldom can a mere two words describe an artist's body of work. For Julia Chandler Lawing, two are perfect. The Georgia native and North Carolina resident celebrates beauty in her oil paintings and in her faith-filled life. High Tide contributor Cathy Coleman reached out to Julia via her web site, www.julialawing.com, where her riotously colorful work can be enjoyed. The artist's generous and articulate responses are condensed here.

CC: People enjoy hearing about how others discovered the Golden Isles. Can you share some of your first impressions?

JL: My parents took me (from Atlanta) to vacation on Jekyll as a toddler. By the time I was five, we were staying at Crafts Ocean Motor Court for a week every summer. The smell of Coppertone and the sight of folding aluminum chairs take me right back. Happy memories are of spending hours on the beach, riding the waves with our old-school inflatable rafts, building 'droopy castles' and 'toad houses'; finding sand dollars and watching ghost crabs dart in and out of their holes, the old Ferris wheel at the pier, eating at the Crab Trap and visiting Fort Frederica. And, yes, applying that glop of tobacco and ammonia to our jellyfish stings! When I was in sixth grade, my (then-divorced) mom decided to return to social work, leaving Atlanta, and accepted a position in Woodbine. I couldn't believe we were going to live fulltime at our favorite vacation place. We moved onto Driftwood Drive in June 1980, and I was so happy.

CC: When people first view your paintings, they must be struck, as I was, by your abundant, juicy colors. You pack in even more hues than nature or man supplies. Where does that construct, that template, come from?

JL: I love color. I can't NOT paint colorfully; maybe it's my way of lighting up the darkness in the world, especially these days. Sometimes I limit myself to a palette of three colors to begin a painting. Then I let loose at the end. In college (UNC-CH), I took a few art history classes, and in the modern survey, I was completely blown away by the Fauves and

Impressionists, and their use of color and light. Although that was my first formal experience with art history, much of my art education and influence came from some dear St. Simons friends, Laura Berman and her parents, the late Irwin and Linda Berman. They, as well as Irwin's mother Jean, were incredible art collectors/appreciators. The Bermans' home was in itself an art museum, and spending a lot of time there over the years exposed me to many famous contemporary artists of all media.



CC: *I get the impression that you are interested in making people FEEL something when they view your art, much as a novelist, filmmaker or songwriter does.*

JL: I definitely want people to feel alive, joyful, peaceful, and I want my paintings to have life in them. I want the viewer to enter the painting. I don't want to describe everything. I want the viewer's brain subconsciously to fill in the blanks.

CC: *Oil painting became your passion in 2014, after exposure to many artistic paths and teaching. Could you imagine adding yet another discipline to your repertoire?*

JL: I'd like to branch out in my themes — maybe more symbolic, allegorical — and employ mixed media such as pastel, charcoal, collage. I've always enjoyed taking classes that push me. I'd also like to do more with figures in the landscape.

CC: *Wildlife, landscapes, architecture, figures: all are featured in your art. How do you choose your next subject?*

JL: I struggle with this -- so many wonderful things to paint, and so little time! I have been like a bird chasing shiny objects, painting whatever is catching my eye at the moment. Plus I've had a lot of commission work this year, for which I am extremely grateful. One of my main goals for 2021 is to work in series, releasing collections that explore a single subject. I usually work on anywhere from five to eight canvases in various stages -- sometimes more. Each painting helps inform the others. I'm always chasing beauty; it speaks to eternity and echoes in my spirit. The beauty and goodness we see now is only a shadow of the things to come. I love the theme of redemption.

CC: *You wrote: "I paint because it engages my senses, my mind, my soul, and stirs a passion in*

me unlike anything else." So, you paint because you HAVE to?

JL: Yes, that sounds right. Even when I wasn't actively creating a lot of art, people always identified me as an artist. I have always drawn: pencil, charcoal, pen and ink. After college, I fed myself creatively with community college night courses: stained glass, woodworking, ceramics. When we started having children, I always encouraged art with them. Then I was asked to teach art at their high school. That was my favorite part of that job: teaching kids about art history. I thought I'd burst if I didn't start creating my own. That led to a search for a beginning oil painting course. The viscosity of oil paint -- the impasto aspect -- is what drew me to that medium. I love texture! I love the messiness, the inexactness. As my mentor says, "You don't have to be right; you just can't be wrong."

CC: *Tell me about this issue's High Tide cover art: your impression of bicyclists and the Pier Village. Did you begin*

with a photo?

JL: I am constantly taking photos everywhere I go and using them as my primary reference. I was walking around the Village one spring day and shooting photos, and there was one I fell in love with: the couple on their bikes. Plus, old hardware stores are a favorite of mine. Because my mom worked when I was young, I relied on my bike and rode everywhere. So some of my best vibes come today from biking around the island. I'm always sharing my memories with my (four) girls and my husband, and one of my favorite things to do is to bike with them. Nearly every time I'm home, I explore and feed myself with new images from the island, which inevitably inspire paintings. I do sometimes paint en plein air and would like to do more of that.

