

Vendue hotel's latest exhibit focus on fluidity in many forms

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"Butterscotch and Hot Fudge Sundae" by Mary Ellen Johnson Provided

Chances are at some point in your years of schooling, you came across a journal prompt or a creative writing prompt. The kind of where an elementary school teacher or some creative, inspirational educator writes a single word on the blackboard for you to ponder, create a journal entry, a creative writing piece, or a drawing that reflects your personal interpretation of that word.

No? Hmmm. Maybe it was just me.

If you've never come across that particular exercise, then you've got a chance to see the results of something similar at the exhibition space in The Vendue, a boutique hotel in downtown Charleston.

The title of the exhibit is “Fluent,” and in a nod to the aforementioned creative exercise, Robert Lange, co-curator of the event with his wife, Megan, requested submissions from artists from around the world and only provided the name of the show.

That’s it. The artists got one word and were told to submit their work based on an interpretation of that theme.



And the results speak to the breadth and imagination of the artists involved.

Thirty artists were selected and 40 paintings are on display. Artistic medium, subject and color palette were all left in the capable hands of the artists. This means that the show is a collection of various art forms, as well as a small sample of some of the most diverse artists working today.

Local artists such as Lange himself and Nathan Durfee are represented alongside nationally recognized artists Anna Kincaide and Ali Cavanaugh.

The sheer volume and talent on display from these artists, all at differing stages in their career and operating in different disciplines, is jaw-dropping to see.

There is Matt Story’s 40-by-60-inch oil painting, “Yellow Dream Gliding” and Mary Engel’s mixed-media sculpture “Black Gator,” an alligator covered in timepieces.

Many of the pieces feature water, blue hues or amphibious creatures. Although some, such as Mary Ellen Johnson’s “Butterscotch and Hot Fudge Sundae,” include a different take on the subject. Her ultra-realistic painting of the titular subject will make any omnivore salivate and seek out the nearest ice cream shop.

And in an evocative tribute to all coffee drinkers around the world, artist Erik Johnson’s portrait of a dash of cream just poured into a cup of coffee offers an image that most of us take for granted every morning. Even if you don’t take your coffee with cream, the juxtaposition of colors and motion represent the theme in a common but starkly beautiful manner.

Each artist may have been given the same word, but within those six letters of the alphabet, multitudes of ideas are contained and great images abound.

The exhibit is on display through Oct. 31 at The Vendue, 19 Vendue Range. Admission is free and open to the public. Call 577-7970 for information.