



COURTESY, PHOTO

"Waterline 1," oil on canvas, 2006, by Thomas Stephens

Artist puts his love of the water and environmental cares on canvas

STEPHENS FROM 1G

ry occupation over the last 10 years as a fishing guide in and around Sarasota Bay.

The dynamic of his work is in the melding of Abstract Expressionist, Impressionist and Pop Art devices to create a promising language of Neo-Ex-

pressionist Naturalism that is fresh and original.

In the early paintings, Stephens simply recorded the visual splendor of the bay and Gulf.

His more recent work incorporates new ideas generated by the contrast of man-made floating junk with the sea in which it is found.

One painting is dense with floating cocktail glasses from foreground to horizon.

"The objects are overconcentrated in this painting," Stephens said, "as a touchstone on environmental issues."

Stephens' turquoise seas, blue and vanilla skies, and bright red and yellow accents in the floating detritus of recreational boaters are too painterly to be subsumed beneath environmental proselytizing alone.

The point of the degradation of our local environment is nonetheless clearly rendered and certainly relevant to our fragile ecology.

Concurrent with this exhibit are separate showings of works by Tim Jaeger, Tobey Albright and Ricki Bernstein.

INTERESTED?

Beyond the Waterline: Thomas Stephens

On display through Dec. 29 at Mack b projects, 500 Tallevast Road, Suite 107, Sarasota. Gallery hours are noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and noon to 3 p.m. Saturday. Call 359-0654 or access mackbgallery.com.