

## CAPTAIN'S CANVAS

In *Fish Soup?* by Tom Stephens, we are swept quickly from the foreground into the far distance to swirl about in his confection of a pastel-colored sky.

Stephens paints in curls, curves, ovals and ellipses, with frenetic and infectious energy. He keeps our attention mostly in the middle ground of the painting, where tight rings of color read as clearly defined forms. Our eyes can then float to the bottom of the canvas, where the shapes become more abstract, or drift into the far distance above, where the high horizon line is blurred by his soft application of pigment.

It's difficult to identify the field of forms, because they're imaginary. The artist wants us to explore the possibilities of what they might be or simply enjoy the marks he has made as gestures of paint. Each stroke of his brush makes a mark, and each mark makes a difference in the success of his work.

When Stephens is not painting, he's taking people out in the Gulf to fish through his charter fishing business. He covers a lot of ground, whether he's painting on huge canvases or exploring the safe harbors and undulating coastline of Sarasota Bay.

Tom Stephens' work can be seen in his studio by appointment.

—Mark Ormond



Tom Stephens and his boat.



Tom Stephens' *Fish Soup?* swirls with imaginary forms.