

Artist in the Spotlight

“Celebrating Elsie” featured 20 of her paintings, mostly of florals, and inspired one couple to marry amidst the canvas garden.



Elsie Lauterbach plies her brush, creating another of her signature florals.

The first time Elsie Lauterbach took up a paint brush, lamplighters came by every night to set the gas streetlights aglow and funeral processions were led by horse-drawn carriages.

The African-American Museum of the Arts in DeLand recently hosted the 95-year old artist's first gallery showing. Irene Johnson, founder of the museum, organized the show in honor of Elsie's work as an artist, patron, and volunteer.

A Brooklyn native, Elsie showed early promise as an artist and planned to study fine arts at the prestigious Pratt Institute. The 15-year old girl's dream ended when her father was killed in an automobile accident.

Working as a private secretary and then as a real estate agent, Elsie married and raised two sons. Despite the untimely deaths of her husband and one of her boys, Elsie refuses to indulge in regrets. “I can be happy any time,” she says.

Today, she travels to far-off and exotic places with her son, enjoys reading and gardening, and attends Central/Central East Region meetings of the Florida Committee. But, she says, it's painting — whether flowers or still life; acrylic, water-color, or pastel — that she enjoys the most. ■