

# Jones Art gallery enjoys being in the center of things

BY IRENE BOWERS

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

**BAYSIDE** — Jones Art gallery is finding its bit of the sun within the shadow of two big storefronts in Town Center.

You'll find Jones Art tucked between P.F. Chang's and Men's Warehouse.

No national franchise here, but the well-known and intensely local family of Louis, Susan and Ryan Jones — father, mother and son, artists all. The gallery includes patriarch Herb Jones, who died in 1998. One of the area's most successful artists, he remains in spirit, his singular vision of Tidewater joining that of his progeny.

Jones Art opened in November 2004 and is the second gallery for the family, with the original still operating at Dominion Tower in Norfolk. As Kempsville residents, the Joneses watched Town Center develop and were eager to be a part of it. "We liked the idea of a central place for the community," Louis Jones said. "We wanted to be a part of the energy here — right on the street so people walking by could stop in."

"It has always been our goal to include local businesses in addition to the big-name, national tenants that are making a home in Town Center,"



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**Jones Art gallery has found a creative home at Town Center, where artists Louis and Susan Jones, and their son, Ryan, run the family studio/gallery on Virginia Beach Boulevard.**

said Armada Hoffler's Lou Haddad. "Jones Art Gallery fits the bill. They are a nice addition to the current array of tenants."

If street-level accessibility was the lure to their new digs, so, too, was the artistic freedom to leave the 1,200-square-foot space unfinished. The gallery is a study in contrasts. Virginia's natural beauty is a continuous source of interest to these artists, and their paintings of seascapes, meadows, skies and trees dominate the walls at eye level.

Concrete flooring and soaring, unfinished walls with exposed piping overhead invoke a gritty, city atmosphere in juxtaposition to the reverent treatment accorded nature. The gallery is also the family's working studio.

Ryan Jones, 27, and a graduate of Virginia Wesleyan College, said the informal gallery has been great for pedestrian traffic. "Everyone's welcome here, even if they just want to watch us paint or walk around

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and look at things," he said.

Stylistically, the artists fall along two lines, realist and impressionist, but they like to blur them. "I'm never afraid to start a painting," Ryan said. "And my mom can never finish one."

Susan Jones laughingly admitted to her penchant for lingering over paintings.

Louis Jones has enjoyed commercial success with

book covers for authors including Neale Donald Walsch of the "Conversations With God" series, as well as illustrations in several John Grisham novels. He is a prolific painter and the one upon whom the weight of his father's vision rests heaviest. "There is something perfect and beautiful in the struggle of each person's life," he said. "Every painting has some part of that story in it."

Thriving at Town Center, the three continue to push their art and one another. "We want to inspire people to do their best,

no matter who they are or what they do," said Susan. "That's why we're here — in the middle of it all."

Jones Art accepts commissions. They offer limited edition and giclee prints, hand signed and numbered, as well as original paintings. Prices start at \$25 for prints.

■ **Gallery hours: Monday through Saturday, noon to 9 p.m.; Sundays, noon to 6 p.m. Phone: 478-2810**

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