

**DEVOTED FAMILY MAN**

# White walls covered in color

**Stockton artist adds New York gallery to resume**



Ela and Jun Jamosmos with their daughter, Asia, and son, Gio, at the piano in the Goodwin Gallery. LORI GILBERT



**By Lori Gilbert**

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It was the white walls.

Jun Jamosmos always dreamed of covering white walls with his paintings, and when he saw an on-line tour of the Agora Gallery in New York's Chelsea district, he had to cover them.

He contacted the gallery about a year ago. On July 7, the Stockton artist will have four pieces on those white walls as part of group show of international artists called Repartie in Art.

"It's really a vision come true to be able to put up these paintings on those walls," Jamosmos said.

It's not that Jamosmos restricts where he shows his art. He and his family visited the Goodwin Gallery in Stockton on Wednesday, and the walls are decidedly not all white. But Jamosmos and his wife, Ela, have covered a portion of them as this month's featured artists in their show, "Duet or Duel."

Each of them painted the same image, he with a brush, she with a palette knife, and the results are striking. Sometimes a brush works better. Sometimes the palette knife better suits a subject. Other times, they both are splendid, including a walkway scene with lots of colorful flowers and another of a towering building.

The show at the Pacific Avenue gallery comes a mere three years after Ela Jamosmos began painting.

Creating art has been a passion for Jun Jamosmos, 52, since he can remember. His first drawing lessons came from his nanny in his native Dumaguete, in the Philippines, when he was 5.

"She would teach me how to draw profiles," Jamosmos said. "I don't know how she was able to draw those kinds of figures, faces. She didn't even graduate, didn't have any degree at all, but she knew how to draw."

Ela Jamosmos, who grew up in Manila, said Filipinos are naturally artistic, and are especially musical. It's part of the culture. It's part of Jun Jamosmos' DNA.

"My inspiration was my grandfather, who I never met," he said. "He passed away early, when he was young. I saw this stack of (my mom's) biology projects and I asked my mom who made the drawings. She said her father. He had excellent drawing skills."

He also was a colorful figure.

"He worked as a spy for the Americans during World War II," Jamosmos said. "My grandmother would relay stories from the war, take information and put it in the hem of her skirt or in the food she would bring. My grandfather got imprisoned by the Japanese. He would take in information and she was part of it."

The spy's grandson moved to America in 1995, joining his parents and two of six siblings who'd arrived earlier. By then Jun Jamosmos had finished school, taking a degree in accounting, although he'd won a national art contest as 11 or 12 and was offered a scholarship through high school and college to study art. His parents feared he'd be led astray in a big-city university as his older brothers had, so he stayed in his hometown and studied business.

He worked as an accountant by day and painted by night, easily switching from left brain and right brain functions. He'd returned to the Philippines to propose to Ela, whom he'd met at church while he was working in Manila. She came to the U.S. in 1997 and the two married and had two children. Daughter Asia is now 16 and son Gio is 11. Both are musicians.

Drawing and painting were always Jun Jamosmos' art of choice. He won competitions and commissions while he was a student.

He first painted jars and still lifes because of his love of earth and earth tones, but now does more portraits.

The four images selected for the Agora Gallery are diverse. One is of a performance artist, a woman who dresses in black Victorian clothes. Another is of a Native American he saw perform at the Pow Wow at Pacific. A third, of a Middle Eastern-looking man, is actually a young man of Mexican origin who worked as a cashier at Marshall's when Jamosmos first met him. The fourth is of his daughter, when she was about 10, with a bright colored scarf over her head.

"Initially these were not the pieces I'd like to put in if I were deciding. The director chose these," Jamosmos said. "They told me my art pieces will resonate with their clientele. I'm the only one in the show with a realistic style of painting."

"In each portrait, Jamosmos shows a strong ability to reproduce facial expressions, physical gestures and body positions to reflect the character of each subject," the gallery wrote in describing Jamosmos for the show. "Placed against richly textured fields of color, the people in his paintings form a strong bond with the viewer, their eyes drawing us into their painted world with surprising clarity."

Fulfilling this dream of paintings on a white wall is made possible through the people of Stockton, Jamosmos said. Many have contributed to the cost of his showing in New York by buying his work or contributing to his on-line fund raiser, "The White Wall Project" through hatchfund.org.

He's hoping to raise enough to take his family to the opening reception of the show on July 9.

Spend any time around him, though, and it's clear that Jamosmos' calling isn't just as an artist, but is also as a husband and father. He takes as much pride in the accomplishments of Ela and his children – he stops talking when Asia begins playing an original composition on piano – as those paintings being hung on white walls in New York.

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