



Artist Betsy Arvelo carries the Caribbean in her soul and on her canvas. Her watercolor paintings reflect her Dominican heritage with a vibrant use of light and color to bring everyday objects and elements of nature to life. “The Caribbean taught me to love and not fear color. Caribbean people use color boldly and without apology on their homes, clothes, everything that touches their lives,” she reveals.

As a young girl in the Dominican Republic, Arvelo found some tempera paints in her mother’s closet. “I loved the colors, the smell, the paint, the brush. It was magic. My life then was very scary and unpredictable. I could paint for hours and not have to think about it,” she says. She has been painting ever since, exhibiting at art shows and winning awards throughout the Dominican Republic and the U.S.

Whether it’s an old, rusty license plate or a blooming magnolia, the shapes seem to come alive in her paintings. She never mixes paint to create colors; she slowly layers colors until the painting seems to glow with light and shadows. “My artistic style is like a marriage of classic representational painting with a 20th-century modern approach of wet-on-wet free-flowing paint,” she explains.

Arvelo’s paintings focus on the reality of everyday things and nature. There’s no hidden symbolism, no secret message. Her goal is to go beyond the object and show the minute details zoomed in and alive, the way nature intended them to be, blemishes and all. You can view her latest magnolia series at the *Masters of Watercolor Expose* exhibit at the Mount Dora Center for the Arts May 1-31.

For more information, visit betsyarvelo.com. – Toni Foster