

PAINTING paradise

Duo prefers Marco for its seclusion and art appreciation

By Roger LaLonde
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Juan Munera and Kira Krumm relax at home. The two are very community-minded, particularly when it comes to art in public places. Roger LaLonde/Staff

Juan Munera and his wife, Kira Krumm, are sold on Marco Island.

Krumm, an interior designer, and Munera, an art gallery owner, see the beauty of Marco's past and its future.

They see Marco growing as an international destination, offering a beautiful, safe haven for residents and families.

"The average age of people will come down because families will see the island as an ideal place to raise kids," Munera said. "Marco is a very family-oriented community, very secluded and doesn't have the risk of big cities."

Krumm agrees, saying that Marco is a rare community.

"People take time to know each other. You know the school teacher, the parents.

"Compared to big cities, we are isolated from crime. We are so fortunate to have this paradise."

Krumm has known Marco since her father's family bought a home here in the '70s. She started her professional life in Virginia Beach, but has always had a fondness for the island.

Munera had been an East Coast businessman. He was born in Columbia, and he and his parents came to the states for vacations.

He has a civil engineering degree, but never practiced in the field. As a young man, he left Columbia choosing to see

other parts of the world.

Munera lived in Australia, New Caledonia and Fiji before coming to Miami 28 years ago. He started a successful export company, using his family's connections in the textile business. As Munera looked for another pace, another direction in life, he came to Marco Island in 2001.

He caught the Judge S. S. Jolley Bridge bug — once people come over the bridge to Marco, they don't want to leave.

Munera, who also draws and paints, saw an opportunity in the field of art and bought a gallery, now called The Studio Gallery on Marco.

Krumm, too, was a world traveler, living in London and Florence and traveling through-

out Europe, the Mediterranean, Caribbean, Mexico and the South Pacific.

Krumm came from a family of artists and art educators, which led her to a degree in fine art, with a major in interior design.

She owned an interior design business in Virginia Beach for six years. She moved her business to Naples in 2000, forming Kira Krumm Interior in 2004.

"Interior environments encompass all my artistic sensibilities," she said.

With the two in complementary businesses, it was a natural for them to meet. In May 2005,

they married.

They have a common thread as both enjoy art.

"People would be surprised to know that Juan, a very masculine man, is usually ethereal, painting flowers and things of nature," Krumm said.

They turned to the Marco Foundation of the Arts because they have a passion for art in public places.

Krumm just headed the foundation's selection committee that chose the 15 sculptures that adorn Marco Island as part of ArtQuest 2006.

Munera is the sales representative for most of the artists in

The Krumms see that lifestyle, with a Polynesian design, changing.

"We see housing coming down and new, more elaborate homes going up," Krumm said. "The expansion of Collier Boulevard will make it a beautiful avenue, just part of a new, exclusive paradise."

Both see the movement in home sales and prices as a positive. They say art will flourish in the new Marco.

They agree that art flourishes in a more wealthy society.

"In studying history, there is an abundance of art when a society is opulent," Munera said.

"Most renaissance took place when societies became more affluent, to be able to support artists."

Krumm thinks that now is the time for art as the city makes changes. She sees cultural changes that open the door for art.

"We have to think creatively to incorporate art," she said.

"The city actually does not have an ordinance that encourages developers to support art. We would like to see the city create one. It works well for other cities, here and in the world."

Tommie Barfield Elementary School gets their support.

Munera helped with a children's art program. He framed the pieces done by Barfield students, then held an opening in the gallery for friends, parents, and grandparents.

"These kids saw their pieces hanging in a gallery and really got inspired," Munera said. "It was a marvelous way to promote art."

The gallery donates paintings to a number of organizations for fundraisers.

"Real estate values in the last five years have totally changed, and will change the history of Marco Island forever," Munera said.

"We have wonderful restaurants, beautiful parks, a yacht club, and we are working on the infrastructure. Marco is an international destination point. Now we have to keep up with its reputation."

ArtQuest, providing the free service to help the foundation.

The non-profit foundation will receive 20 percent of sales when no other gallery is involved.

Munera understands Marco's history. He got a first-hand education on Marco when he helped develop the exhibit on the history of Marco architecture that hangs in City Hall.

"I learned of the mentality of the island in the early days of the city," he said. "It had a natural beauty. So beautiful that developers didn't think about the need of more beauty for a middle-class community."