

## FLORIDA FIND

# A Caribbean love affair

## For Grove artist, life imitates art

BY MIREYA NOVO

mnovo@miamiherald.com

Artist Eileen Seitz treats us to watermelon for breakfast in the house her architect husband, J Beattie, built for them in Coconut Grove. The home boasts enormous windows, soaring ceilings and a skylight that afford us a magnificent view of her tropical garden. It's a cozy place to be on a rainy morning. Her bright watercolors, hanging everywhere, appear to be an extension of the lush Grove setting. It's a matter of life imitating art.

In reality, Seitz was born into a world light years away from the tropical splendor she would later idealize in her paintings. Born and raised in Manhattan, her artistic bent surfaced early:

she began drawing as a precocious 8-year-old and at 16 sold her first painting to a New York City art dealer. After high school, she was admitted to the prestigious Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, but she dreamed of faraway places and took time off to travel.

Her journey of discovery

right back to the Garden of Eden," says Seitz. The trip became a sort of epiphany for her, so much so that she spent months living on the islands and even worked on a farm in Eleuthera.

With a friend, she hitchhiked through Mexico. "I wanted to live the exact opposite of the concrete jungle," she said. "I found the beauty of these places overwhelming." As she discovered this new world, she also began capturing its beauty on canvas. "Each painting has a spiritual personality of its own, as the culture,

climate and nature it rejoices in," Seitz said.

Seitz moved to Coconut Grove in the early '80s and began publishing her paint-



**STEPPING INTO A PAINTING:** An admirer of Seitz's framed painting of an island scene, top, turned it into reality in Exuma, the Bahamas. He built identical houses there and invited the artist to see it. 'It was like walking into a dream,' she said.

