

Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina

January 19 - March 18

Ninety-three creations by 18 multicultural grassroots artists who live in North Carolina make up this lively exhibition organized by the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. Signs and Wonders is co-curated by David Steel, Curator of European Art at the North Carolina Museum of Art, and Roger Manley, noted North Carolina folkartist.

"Over the past 25 years, there has been a growing recognition that significant works of art are being created outside the institutions of the contemporary art world," said David Steel. "This extraordinary art, sometimes labeled outsider, is made by seemingly ordinary individuals without formal art training, who, initially at least, often have no conception of themselves as artists or of their creations as art."

Paintings, sculptures and assemblages on themes ranging from pop culture to patriotism, from the earthy to the exotic, and from nature to the supernatural are on view in the exhibition. As diverse, are the range of materials used by artists including wood (trees, logs, roots, plywood, driftwood); stone; cement; animal teeth, claws and hooves; false eyelashes; metal; tar; chicken wire; whiskey bottles; automobile paint; oils; wax crayons; and cardboard. The range of subject matter is equally wide, including human figures (a U.S. President, a piano player, Elvis Presley, bathing beauties, businessmen and women with briefcases), animals, biblical themes, dreams, a butcher shop, allegories, apocalyptic visions, airplanes, abstract compositions, and other themes that are indescribable.

To prepare the exhibition, Steel and Manley traveled the state for a year visiting outsider artists and collectors, gradually compiling a list that grew to include the names of more than 130 artists. Manley, a folklorist and photographer, has been involved with outsider art for over 15 years. The result of their research is the exhibition Signs and Wonders and an accompanying 135-page, illustrated book with the same title that is the first to document outsider art in North Carolina. The catalogue is available at St. John's Museum of Art at a cost of $20.

This exhibition is sponsored by Cape Fear Community College, The Pierce Fund of the Cape Fear Community Foundation, Shearson Lehman Hutton Inc., Mr. & Mrs. Adair Graham, a gift in honor of Christina L. Johnson, Knox and Mary Ann Massey, and Mr. & Mrs. William H. Overman, Jr.

Harold Garrison with Watergate Pistol
Exhibitions

Virginia Wright-Frierson: Paintings of Cortona, Italy
March 30 - May 20

During the summer of 1989 Wilmington artist Virginia Wright-Frierson spent ten weeks in Cortona, Italy, as an artist-in-residence with the University of Georgia's Studies Abroad Program. Her duties were to paint as she desired, act as a role model for 150 art students, and conclude her 10-week stay with the presentation of a lecture about her work. The outcome of this idyllic appointment is an exceptional group of watercolors and oils depicting the landscape, architecture, markets, and a variety of other images of the provincial locale of Cortona.

The beauty and history of Cortona steeped in the light and atmosphere of northern Italy have drawn artists for centuries. These conditions combined with the easy accessibility of museums and art collections of Rome and Florence, plus a schedule devoted to painting, triggered a reaction in Virginia Wright-Frierson to create an impressive group of paintings and to explore a new medium. In these oils, the artist developed a stronger color range and a bolder, freer style.

The exhibition highlights over 30 of Virginia Wright-Frierson' s paintings of Cortona, Italy. Included are both watercolors and oils on paper and canvas.

Frank London: Vital Objects
March 30 - May 20

This exhibition of Frank London's paintings was organized by the Hobson Pittman Memorial Gallery located in the Blount-Bridgers House in Tarboro and consists of 27 paintings and drawings by the North Carolina artist. London was born in Pittsboro, North Carolina, in 1876 and died in New York City in 1945.

Educated at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Pratt Institute and the William Merritt Chase School of Art in New York, London worked as a designer of textiles and stained glass windows for twenty years. In 1923 he moved to Paris with his family to pursue his painting career and returned to New York in 1925. London was included in numerous exhibitions before his death and a number of posthumous ones, including a retrospective in 1948.
Art History Lecture Series

A demonstration of Sea Grass Basketmaking by Henrietta Snype, basketmaker from South Carolina's Low Country, will be one of the highlights of the lecture series Traditional Southern Folk Art which begins Friday, February 23, at 11:00 a.m. The lecture series will focus on the more traditional utilitarian folk arts which provide an interesting contrast to the more expressive quality of outsider or visionary art represented in the exhibition Signs and Wonders. In addition to basketmaking, the series will also feature the tradition of quilting and folk pottery in North Carolina. The schedule of lectures and speakers is included in the calendar. This project is supported by a Community Service Grant from Cape Fear Community College.

Docents

The Docent Class this year has 25 enthusiastic new members who have spent this fall studying art, learning about the Museum and its collection, and being introduced to the techniques of conducting tours. In mid-November, new and experienced Docents alike enjoyed an overnight trip to Winston-Salem to attend a Docent Discovery Workshop at Reynolda House and to tour the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

Starting in February, members of the new class of Docents will have the opportunity to put their skills to work as they begin conducting tours for groups of all ages — kindergarten through senior citizens, including all the 5th graders in New Hanover, Pender and Brunswick Counties. In addition to conducting tours, presenting slide presentations in the schools, and assisting with the installation of temporary exhibitions, Docents have now begun helping out in the office with a myriad of duties. We simply cannot thank them enough for all their support in so many facets of life at St. John's!
Classes at the Cowan House

Classes, workshops, and demonstrations are held in the Cowan House, located at 208 South Second Street in the Museum complex. The Museum requires pre-registration for classes. Museum members receive a discount on tuition for classes. To register, please call the Museum Education Department, 763-0281.

Classes for Children

Fantasia Characters (ages 6-10)
Jacque Williams
Saturdays 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
February 10 & 24
Class Fee: $18.00

This two-part class will involve students in creating colorful, imaginative “fantasia characters” which will then be transferred to paper through the batik process. Creative, technically exciting with wonderful end results!

Let's Make Cartoons! (ages 8-12)
Jacque Williams
Saturdays 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
March 3 & 24
Class Fee: $40.00

Have you ever wondered how cartoons are made? This class will provide a general introduction to the animation process through hands-on production of a film. Students will create cartoon characters and “movement” drawings and view their work on TV.

Ukrainian Egg Dyeing (ages 8-12)
Jacque Williams
Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
March 31
Class Fee: $8.00 (Materials Included)

An introduction to the ancient tradition of Ukrainian egg dyeing. Students will utilize special vibrantly colored dyes, beeswax, and a funnel-shaped tool called a kitska in exploring this centuries old process.

Classes for Adults

Beginning and Intermediate Watercolor
Gladys Faris
Mondays 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
March 5 - April 9
Class Fee: $55.00

Capture the beauty of springtime in watercolor! In addition to studio sessions on still life, students will work outside on location (weather permitting) in an exploration of basic watercolor techniques.

Basic Drawing
Michael Van Hout
Tuesdays 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
January 30 - February 6
Class Fee: $50.00

An introduction to drawing for beginners and those with some experience. Emphasis will be on contour and gesture drawing as students explore a variety of media and subject matter.

Drawing and Painting
Hester C. Donnelly
Wednesdays 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Class Fee: $30.00 (4 sessions)

St. John’s Artist-in-Residence has structured this class to suit the individual needs of the beginner as well as the advanced student. It provides an introduction to the fundamentals of drawing and painting including color mixing, canvas preparation, and the use of a variety of media.

Watercolor
Hester C. Donnelly
Thursdays 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Class Fee: $30.00 (4 sessions)

This course provides an introduction to the technical aspects of watercolor through the investigation of still life and landscape subjects.
Educational Programs

Sunday Series

St. John’s is planning a series of programs on Sunday afternoon to highlight the exhibition Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina. Since the work included in the show covers a broad range of themes (religion, politics, animals, daily life,) a series of diverse programs is planned. Storytelling, poetry reading, and concerts featuring gospel, bluegrass, jazz and barbershop harmony will be featured on six Sunday afternoons in February and March. Details are included in the calendar. This project is supported by a Community Service Grant from Cape Fear Community College.

Special Announcement


1989-90 Annual Membership Campaign

This year, St. John’s Membership Committee has set a goal of $45,000 to be raised toward the Museum’s 1989-90 Operating Budget of $195,000. Your membership in St. John’s Museum of Art enables the Museum to continue to present the highest quality exhibitions and educational programs. Members’ dues support not only the fine exhibitions and education program schedules but enable the Museum to produce a variety of publications including St. John’s Calendar and exhibition catalogues, and ensure the preservation of the Museum’s valuable collection.

This year’s Membership Campaign will kickoff on Thursday, February 15, at 5:30 p.m. in the Hughes Gallery. Anyone who would like to work with the Campaign should notify the Museum Office (763-0281). The Membership Campaign will continue through March 15 at 5:00 p.m.

New Acquisitions

St. John’s Museum of Art recently acquired six works of art by North Carolina Artists. Included are an untitled abstract painting from 1938 by Will Henry Stevens (American, 1881-1948), given in memory of Barbara Hess by John W. Hess; Bow Out, 1988, a watercolor on paper by Gladys Faris; three etchings on paper by Ann Carter Pollard entitled Jacob and the Angel, given by Claude Howell; and an untitled watercolor on paper by Caroline McCauley, given in memory of Moyd Lovejoy by Gordon B. Lovejoy.
Calendar

January

Thurs. 18 Members' Preview: Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina. Hughes Gallery. 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Fri. 19 Walk-through tour of Signs and Wonders with co-curator David Steel. Hughes Gallery. 11:00 a.m.

February

Thurs. 1 "The African Spiritual Legacy in Black Southern Visionary Art" slide lecture by Judith McWillie, Department of Art, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia. Hughes Gallery. 7:30 p.m.

Thurs. 8 St. John's Museum Art Auction/Art Sale in conjunction with WHQR's Wine Tasting/Wine Auction. Coast Line Convention Center. 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Sun. 11 Sunday Series concert by folk musician Frank Proffitt, Jr., Visiting Artist at Cape Fear Community College. Proffitt will perform Appalachian Mountain music on his homemade banjo and dulcimer. Hughes Gallery. 2:00 p.m.

Walk-through tour of Signs and Wonders with Museum docents following concert.

Thurs. 15 Membership Campaign kick-off 5:30 p.m.

Sat. 17 St. John's Museum Board of Directors Workshop. Cowan House. 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon.

Sun. 18 Sunday Series poetry reading with Charles Fort, poet. Fort will read from his writings on Wilmington visionary Minnie Evans. Hughes Gallery. 2:00 p.m.

The Angel That Stands By Me, 30 minute documentary film about the life of Minnie Evans will be shown following the reading. Cowan House.

Fri. 23 Traditional Southern Folk Art, four-part lecture series begins. "The Enduring Art of Low Country Basketry" by Dale Rosengarten, McCullenville, South Carolina.

Sun. 25 Sunday Series concert by the Uncalled Four barbershop quartet. Hughes Gallery. 2:00 p.m.

Walk-through tour of Signs and Wonders following concert.

March

Fri. 2 Traditional Southern Folk Art slide lecture on "North Carolina's Pottery Tradition" by Stuart Schwartz, Director of the Museum of York County, Rock Hill, South Carolina. Hughes Gallery. 11:00 a.m.

Sun. 4 Sunday Series by jazz singer Nneenna Freelon, Visiting Artist at Brunswick Community College. Hughes Gallery. 2:00 p.m.

Walk-through tour of Signs and Wonders following concert.

Fri. 9 Traditional Southern Folk Art lecture. Speaker to be announced. Hughes Gallery. 11:00 a.m.

Sun. 11 Sunday Series concert by the L.R. Dumas Gospel Choir from the Warner Temple AME Zion Church. Hughes Gallery. 2:00 p.m.

Walk-through tour of Signs and Wonders following concert.

Fri. 16 Traditional Southern Folk Art slide lecture. "My Mother Pieced Quilts" by Ruth Roberson, author and Director of The North Carolina Quilt Project. Hughes Gallery. 11:00 a.m.

Sun. 18 Sunday Series Bluegrass concert by the "Dixie Bee String Band." Hughes Gallery. 2:00 p.m.

Walk-through tour of Signs and Wonders following concert.

Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina closes. 4:00 p.m.

Thurs. 29 Members' Preview: Frank London: Vital Objects and Virginia Wright-Frierson: Paintings of Cortona, Italy. Hughes Gallery 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

New Members' Welcome 6:00 p.m.

Fri. 30 Walk-through tour of Virginia Wright-Frierson: Paintings of Cortona, Italy with Virginia Wright-Frierson. Hughes Gallery. 11:00 a.m.
**New Members**  
*Since October 1, 1989*  

**INDIVIDUAL**  
Diane B. Ahlberg  
Mrs. Emily W. Barefoot  
Margaret D. Barron  
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June Gottlieb-Brown  
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Ginny Hawkins  
Deborah Heathcock  
Zita B. Humphrey  
Shirley Leonard  
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Jeannette S. McLean  
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Margaret Moore  
Ronald F. Mowry  
Susan J. O'Malley  
Ann C. Pottorff  
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Geraldine Taylor  
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**CONTRIBUTOR**  
Mr. & Mrs. Carl B. Brown

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**Members Who Have Increased Their Level of Support**  
*Since October 1, 1989*  

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Special Recognition

Mary Lou Corbin

A variety of volunteer "opportunities" exist at St. John's Museum of Art, and Mary Lou Corbin has tried her hand at almost all of them. Included are her duties as a Docent leading children and adults through a myriad of exhibitions ranging from antique furniture to the Critters of outsider artist Clyde Jones; her beautifully calligraphied "Schedule of Events" posted monthly at St. John's entrance; her less artistic but just as necessary hand in painting platforms, pedestals, and walls during exhibition installations; and her organization and preparation of the refreshments served at the Members' Preview of Signs and Wonders. As if all of this were not enough, Mary Lou still finds time to surprise the staff and fellow volunteers with a delicious cake or an entire gourmet lunch she prepared the night before. We only hope our many volunteers such as Mary Lou Corbin enjoy their work at St. John's as much as the staff appreciates their help!

Mary Lou Corbin enjoying Clyde Jones' Critters.

St. John's Museum of Art
114 Orange Street
Wilmington, NC 28401

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Staff
C. Reynolds Brown, Director
Margaret R. Worthington, Curator of Education
Pamela Jobin, Assistant to Director
Rhetina Dean, Security
Santiago McDonald, Security
Melva Calder, Photographer

Hours
Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. until 5 p.m.
Sunday 12 noon-4 p.m.
Closed Monday
Admission Free
Museum Phone: 919/763-0281

Accredited by the American Association of Museums
The educational programs are jointly supported by the Grassroots Arts Program of the North Carolina Arts Council, a state agency, and the Arts Council of the Lower Cape Fear.