



News Release

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State Museum Opens S.C.
Abstract Art Exhibit Feb. 24

Columbia, S.C. --- The new art exhibit opening soon at the South Carolina State Museum will examine a topic not always quickly associated with the traditions of the Palmetto State – abstract art.

Abstract Art in South Carolina: 1949-2012 will open Feb. 24 in the Lipscomb Art Gallery with the first inclusive look at the evolution and influences of abstract painting and sculpture in South Carolina.

The exhibit will include work by pioneering artists such as William Halsey, Corrie McCallum, J. Bardin, Carl Blair and Merton Simpson, and contemporary artists currently working in communities across South Carolina today, such as James Busby, Shaun Cassidy, Enid Williams, Paul Yanko, Katie Walker and Tom Stanley, among many others.

In all, work by more than 40 artists will be included in the exhibition, which focuses on one of the most important aspects of South Carolina’s visual culture.

“South Carolina has a rich history in visual art, and abstract painting and sculpture have played a huge role in this history beginning in the mid-20th century,” said Curator of Art Paul Matheny.

“Following World War II, the appreciation of art and culture began to expand across the state. Local artists began exploring new ideas and pursued artistic opportunities in and out of the state, and South Carolina college and university art departments began - and continue - to bring in artists from across the United States, to teach and exhibit their work.”

This practice brought in new ideas about how to approach the making of art. In other instances, South Carolina natives, influenced by other artists and exploring their own ideas, pursued artistic opportunities outside of the state. Their influences, such as the Southern landscape, tidal creeks and marshes, plus a variety of cultural experiences, remained influential in their work.

“Many influences worked together to bring South Carolina art to the point it is today,” Matheny said. “This exhibition reflects the journeys made by these individuals, the art they created, and their influences along the way.

“The exhibit includes many large scale works of art on canvas, as well as mixed media work that pushed the boundaries, and our perceptions, of how abstract art is perceived,” said the curator. “Museum guests will be surprised and inspired by the work of these important artists.”

The art includes paint media from acrylic and oil on canvas, wood panel and paper to three-dimensional works made of cast aluminum, other metal and stone, said Matheny.

The project is funded in part by the Cultural Council of Richland and Lexington Counties and the South Carolina Arts Commission, which receives support from the National Endowment of the Arts and the John and Susan Bennett Memorial Arts Fund of the Coastal Community Foundation of S.C.

Abstract Art in South Carolina: 1949-2012 can be seen through Aug. 26. For more information on the exhibit, contact Paul Matheny at (803) 898-4921 or visit southcarolinastatemuseum.org.

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CUTLINE #1 FOR ABSTRACT ART IN S.C.

“Cherry Grove 2,” a 2004-05 oil on canvas, is an example of the abstract art of Myrtle Beach’s Brian Rutenberg, a successful, creative force in the New York art world. It can be seen, along with the art of more than 40 other South Carolina artists, in the South Carolina State Museum’s new exhibit *Abstract Art in South Carolina, 1949-2012*, which opens Feb. 24 in Columbia .

[Click here to view/download hi-res photo](#)

Photo courtesy S.C. State Museum

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CUTLINE #2 FOR ABSTRACT ART IN S.C.

The South Carolina State Museum’s new exhibit *Abstract Art in South Carolina, 1949-2012*, contains many examples of early abstract art in the state up to the present. A good example of early work in the style is William Halsey’s “The Structure,” an oil on masonite work from 1949, courtesy of the Gibbs Museum of Art.

[Click here to view/download hi-res photo](#)

Photo courtesy S.C. State Museum

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CUTLINE #3 FOR ABSTRACT ART IN S.C.

Merton Simpson, an early South Carolina abstract artist, painted “Untitled” with oil on canvas in 1949. Courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of Art, it can be seen, along with scores of fascinating paintings and sculptures, in the South Carolina State Museum’s new exhibit *Abstract Art in South Carolina, 1949-2012*.

[Click here to view/download hi-res photo](#)

Photo courtesy S.C. State Museum

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