



News Release

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State Museum's Folk Art has
"Uncommon" Appeal

Columbia, S.C. --- Whiskey bottles made of coat hangers, held in the coat hanger hands of coat hanger cowboys; face jugs of clay making faces of fear or displeasure; wooden turkeys and homemade turkey calls; paintings, drawings and carvings of fantasy; airplanes with fans for propellers; and so much more.

These are but a few of the nearly 170 captivating items in the South Carolina State Museum's exhibit *Uncommon Folk: Folk Art from the South Carolina State Museum Collection*, which, since it opened in the museum's Lipscomb Gallery in the spring, has elicited expressions of awe and delight from museum guests.

"There are many artists who are well known and recognized by their communities, whose work is easily hidden away from a broader audience," said Paul Matheny, curator of art. "This exhibition allows viewers the opportunity to appreciate art by uncommon individuals who create indelible works of art.

"Some of these artists create because they were influenced by previous generations, while others make artwork to fulfill an inner desire to be creative and produce something unlike anything else that has come before it."

Most of the items in the 7500 square-foot exhibit have never, or rarely, been seen, and are inspiring wonder at the creativity of the artists, most of whom have had no formal training, who wrought these amazing pieces.

Greenville's William Thompson painted the wall-sized "About South Carolina" with its many details and semi-historic, semi-apocalyptic theme. "You could spend a good half-hour just reading and taking in that one piece," said Matheny.

"House II," a 10-foot-tall soda-fired stoneware piece by David Hooker of Woodruff, contains many flat panels that fit together to present the artist's vision of a house. Inspired by the South Carolina face jug tradition, Hooker has formed three-dimensional stoneware components such as heads, masks, bowls, birds, a watering can and more.

Another large piece is "Lee Rock City," an actual trailer used and decorated by Columbia self-taught painter Ernest "the Chicken Man" Lee. Covered with model boats, cars, a carriage, Coca Cola signs and more, the trailer even displays Lee's homespun philosophy in the message "Be What You Are, Don't Be What You ain't Because If You Be What You ain't Then You ain't What You Are."

On a nearby wall one can find two examples of Lee's popular "funky chicken" paintings.

Among the many enchanting pieces to be found in this show are "Aeon Angel," a 1988 enamel painting on wood and vinyl siding by James Harold Jennings; Clayborne Bolt's whimsical and colorful "Whirligig" and "Bird Box;" and Maxie McConnell Eades's "Sunday Carvings," poplar figures of five of her friends on loan to the museum from her "Hallmark Hearth of Fame."

"The homegrown talent in this state is astounding, and *Uncommon Folk* shows it very powerfully," said Matheny. "This exhibit will cast a spell on anyone who sees it."

The exhibit is the subject of a one-hour documentary, also called "Uncommon Folk," which premiered Feb. 26 at the museum and aired March 10 statewide on the SCETV network. It will be shown again at the museum Sept. 24-25 and Oct. 9 and 30.

Uncommon Folk is sponsored by AT&T, the Real Yellow Pages. It can be seen through Jan. 15, 2012.

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CUTLINE #1 FOR UNCOMMON FOLK

“Clean Up Day,” a 2006 acrylic on canvas by artist Cathleen Ellisor, is one of the scores of enchanting folk art pieces to be found in the South Carolina State Museum’s exhibit *Uncommon Folk: Folk Art from the South Carolina State Museum Collection*. It can be seen through Jan. 15.

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

Photo by Susan Dugan/ courtesy S.C. State Museum

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CUTLINE #2 FOR UNCOMMON FOLK

Cayce resident Walter Streetmyer created this windmill and truck from scrap metal in 1980. In the South Carolina State Museum’s exhibit *Uncommon Folk*, work by self-taught artists, from painting to woodwork to pottery, coat hanger people and much, much more, casts a spell of fascination on guests.

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

Photo by Susan Dugan/ courtesy S.C. State Museum

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CUTLINE #3 FOR UNCOMMON FOLK

Self-taught artist L.C. Carson created “Fantasy” from painted carved wood around 1980. In addition to carving, Carson is well-known for building his “Concrete City,” miniatures of famous structures from throughout history. Samples of his impressive work can be seen through Jan. 15 in the South Carolina State Museum’s exhibit *Uncommon Folk: Folk Art from the South Carolina State Museum Collection*.

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Photo by Susan Dugan/ courtesy S.C. State Museum