



celebrating
contemporary art
in ALABAMA

THE NATURE OF BEING SOUTHERN

This exhibition, held at the Holman and Ethel Johnson Center for the Arts from August 14 through November 8, 2009, is the result of a highly collaborative effort between the Alabama State Council on the Arts, the Troy-Pike Cultural Art Center, Inc. and Troy University. This catalogue includes selected samples from 41 artists of Alabama who are currently active artists and are past recipients of Fellowship Grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts. This exhibit marks the first time so many fellowship recipients have shown their work alongside each other. It is our sincere hope that anyone interested in contemporary art in Alabama will recognize just how important an exhibit of this magnitude is.

Celebrating Contemporary Art in Alabama
August 14-November 8, 2009
Johnson Center for the Arts, Troy, Alabama
Artists Biographies

Katherine Adams, Birmingham, AL

www.adamskatherine.com

Adams is a graduate of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa with Bachelor of Science Degree in Education. She left her teaching profession in 1997 to pursue a career as a full-time art photographer, and has been involved in commercial and art photography since 1980. She was a freelance commercial photographer for local and national publications and has had work published in five books for *Southern Living* and *Creative Ideas for Living*. Her fine art work includes commissioned black and white photography, Polaroid emulsion transfers, collage, and digital montage. Nazraeli Press published a monograph of her work, *Couturier Dreams*, in December 2005. Her work is represented in a private collection with JGS in New York and other private collections. Katherine Adams states, "As an artist, I am drawn to work that challenges commonly held ideas about the "true nature" of things. My work explores the relationship between nature's elements, embodiment of spirit, and blood memory. This artistic expression is usually associated with our connection to ancestors, nature and the collective unconscious. I am most intrigued by our continual transformation with all the complexities of emotion, memory, circumstance and how they merge to awaken a deeper part of our selves. I use photographic technique and ideas of alchemy to communicate the continuation of concepts going beyond what was recorded in a single frame. I invite the viewer to look beyond the surface to explore the celebration of life and spirit."

Pinky /MMBass, Fairhope, AL

www.alabamaarts.org/bass.html

Pinky/MM Bass received a BA from Agnes Scott College in 1958, and an MFA from Georgia State University in 1988. Her work is in selected collections of the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, Polaroid Corporation, Cambridge, MA, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA, Montgomery Museum of Art, Montgomery, AL, and Huntsville Museum of Art, Huntsville, AL, just to name a few. About her work, Bass states, "My work in photography, whether pinhole or standard, has always aimed at revealing edges of the mystery of life, aging and death. Pinhole, with its unusual perspective and glorious array of mistakes, seems suited to my particular investigation of our being. Often surreal, the images that I prefer seem to exist on the edge of the dream world. The images in this exhibition are from the series entitled *Cyrillic Layers* and were taken in Macedonia in 1997."

Barbara Lee Black, Gordo, Alabama

www.barbaraleeblack.com

Black is currently pursuing a Masters of Fine Art, Studio Art, University of Alabama, 2011 She received an MA in Studio Art from the University of Alabama, May 2009, and a B.A., New College, University of Alabama, 1989, Fine art photography and cultural studies. Of her work in

this exhibition, she states, “The photographs presented here give new life to objects which were once cherished but became frayed, broken, discarded and forgotten. In each of these images the doll motif functions as the primary object which is also the subject. Created in miniature human likeness, the dolls featured in these images are not perfect and ideal representations, but rather are imperfect replicas, flawed and subject to time’s inexorable effects. Through their displaced and manipulated contexts, the formerly discarded and forgotten are revived to create new meanings and alternative histories and futures. Through the still photograph, these castaways can be cherished once more and this achieve wholeness and immortality. The viewer who is willing to explore the various associations is led into the labyrinth of the unconscious mind, which is a source of dreams, myths, and fairy tales.”

Barb Bondy, Auburn, AL

www.southernartistry.org/barb_bondy

Barb Bondy holds an M.F.A. with a concentration in 2-D from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale; an Honours BFA in Painting, Drawing and Photography from the University of Windsor, ON, Canada; and an Ontario College Diploma in Photography from Sheridan College, ON. Bondy’s interests in the correlations between science, mathematics, art and philosophy inform her creative research which is directed primarily toward exploring the nature and potential of the human mind and brain through drawing and photography. Barb Bondy is a College of Liberal Arts Engaged Scholar and Associate Professor of Art at Auburn University. Since 2005, she has taught drawing classes for incarcerated individuals in Alabama State Prisons for Auburn University’s nationally recognized *Alabama Prison Arts & Education Project*. “My creative research utilizes primarily drawing and photography to explore questions about the functions of the mind and brain, the relationship between the two, and how, through various modes of perception and states of consciousness, the mind and brain operate to form an individual’s experience of the world,” says Bondy.

Cal Breed, Ft. Payne, AL

www.orbixhotglass.com

Cal Breed “found glass” in 1994—first in assembling stained glass windows, and finally to glassblowing. He spent six months apprenticing under Cam Langley, one of the South’s few hot glass artists. From there, Cal went to Haystack to study with Paul Cunningham who pushed Cal to finish his BFA degree at Ohio State University under Ruth King. Upon graduation from Ohio State in 1997, Cal did some Graduate work with Jack Wax at Illinois State University which opened many doors to the possibilities with glass as an art medium. He also continued honing design and technical skills by studying with Dante Marioni, Dick Marquis, Lino Tagliapietra, Benjamin Moore and Richard Royal at both The Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and Pilchuck Glass School. In 2003 Cal opened his personal studio, Orbix Hot Glass on the edge of Little River Canyon National Preserve in North Alabama. Today, Orbix creates a Studio Series and a Signature Series that adhere to Cal’s original purpose of marrying the engineer and artist within him. All of the designs pay close attention to proportion, color, purity and form. Each is chosen with specific intention to accentuate details particularly innate to glass. The Studio Designs use simple overlapping techniques to create optical distortions, and highlight contrasts of rich and vague color. The Signature Designs, mainly defined by multiple transparent incalmo bands, employ color gradients and optical density to express breathtaking arrangements. Cal Breed says, “My compositions of color and light are created by using the incalmo technique of joining multiple open-ended hand-

blown bubbles. In exploring the scope of this traditional technique, I discovered the ability to highlight elements beyond that of color, such as surface texture and optical depth. Also with incalmo, line becomes an important element to my design choices. The textured lines created by the joints give a history of the bubble – its deconstruction and reassembly. My manipulation of form direct these lines in paths that bend light and cause color to reverberate through each piece. As we journey through the paths of our lives, certain experiences give us the opportunity to sense the subtle push and pull or the ebb and flow of our creator’s touch on our lives. Recently, I have found myself drawn to observe water and its ability to flow. Water flows though the most obtrusive situations with ease. It is as if it is obediently following its path guided by an unseen yet recognizable force. As an artist, I have these pushes and pulls drawing me into unknown areas. I must not be anxious, but I must have faith that as water flows on its path, I have the same creator that stirs the waters.

The Ebb and Flow series tracks my reflections on this pulsing surge, and my entering a new phase in trying to realize my peace in this flow. *Echo Series*: This blown glass vessel was switched on its axis after joining all the bubbles to change the direction of the lines. The vertical banding in this piece echoes the teardrop form and resonates a beautiful quietness.”

Annie Kammerer Butrus, Birmingham, AL

www.akbutrus.com

Annie Butrus received a BA in Art, cum laude, 1993 Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA and an MFA, 1999 from University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN

Annie Butrus states, “My work focuses on our perception of the places we live. These projects involve documenting the changes in the landscape and the emotions evoked in response to that change. Mainly realized in painting, my work has concentrated on the growth around the Birmingham-metro area where I reside. Peach Tree Trail is a project about the Culp Family’s peach orchard in Chilton County, Alabama. This work in particular deals with the 2007 farming year where a devastating late freeze and ensuing drought resulted in the loss of at least 50% of the peach crop. The impact of weather, its critical role in the life of the farmer, underscores the basic concern of this project. Visiting the farm every season, I trace the shadows made by the trees onto specially prepared panels. Afterwards, in the studio, I connect the two panels making a mirror image of the tracing on the upper panel. I use a glazing technique that is my contemporary version of the Dutch Old Masters technique as it builds and negates the surface and body of the painting.”

Merrilee Challis, Birmingham, AL

www.thebottletree.com

Education: Post-Graduate Apprenticeship, Fabric Workshop and Museum, 2000; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, MFA, 2000; University of Alabama at Birmingham, B.A. Studio Arts, *cum laude*, 1994 Universitat Mannheim, Mannheim, Germany, Internship Program, 1991-92.

Merrilee Challis states, “The world is ephemeral, often brutally so. I find that I tether myself to the world through the process of making art. My work arises from a miasma of disparate sources: fairy tales, flora, fauna, and medical anomalies. Drawing has always been the mainstay of my practice. I usually begin with pen and ink, and without much planning, follow my intuition. The work evolves organically out of an obsessive process (mark-making, stitching, etc), in which some sort of “order” is created, subverted, and re-established. Much of my recent work has been consumed by a sense of

taking stock of nature, depicting a world out of balance. Forrest creatures, tidal pools, and sub-aquatic creatures reflect the fecundity of life, teeming --albeit, despite a vulnerability -- from birth to death, from the bloom of life, to adaptation, to decay† and back to life again. I feel my work links both Voodoo and Victorian sensibilities, through a filter of natural history and childhood book illustration.”

Gary Chapman, Birmingham, AL

www.uab.edu/artstudio/chapman

Gary Chapman is currently Professor of Art, University of Alabama at Birmingham (MFA, Cranbrook Academy of Art; BA and BS, Berea College)

Gary Chapman states, “With good intentions, my subjects are passionately searching. They are engaged in the proverbial, if not cliché, pursuit of meaning, knowledge, experience, or truth. They are on the quest of ‘finding themselves,’ looking externally and through the eyes and experiences of others. The children in these paintings, are still pure in this search, determined and armed with a clear vision; naïve. The adults however, begin their search for the elusive, already encumbered by all that they bring to the search; that which they know, have experienced and have come to believe. While still pure in their intentions, they have lost their innocence.” Chapman has been deemed an “Alabama Master,” in the publication Alabama Masters, Artists and Their Work, published in 2008 by the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Allyson Comstock, Opelika, AL

www.allysoncomstock.com

Allyson Comstock holds a Bachelor of Arts in studio art from Occidental College and Master of Fine Arts from Arizona State University. Following graduate school, she studied Japanese papermaking at Pyramid Atlantic in Washington D.C. with Yoichi Fujimori, the proprietor of the Fuji Paper Mill, in Tokushima, Japan. Working primarily in handmade paper to create 2-dimensional artworks and in mixed media to create sculptural installations, Comstock explores ideas related to the natural world such as the healing properties of nature and ecological issues. Her work has been shown in solo and invitational exhibitions, including shows at the Ohio Craft Museum, the Delaware Contemporary Art Center, Kiang Gallery in Atlanta, and Blue Spiral I Gallery in Asheville, North Carolina. Her work is in the permanent collection of the Mobile Museum of Art and the corporate collections of Sutherland, Asbill and Brennan and Wheat First Securities. Comstock was awarded fellowships from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the Women’s Studio Workshop in New York and she was artist-in-residence at the Ucross Foundation and the Hambidge Center. Allyson Comstock states, “Trips to the Bahamian island of San Salvador, Belize, Costa Rica and the Galapagos Islands, whitewater rafting on the Salmon, Chama, Pigeon Forge, Nantahala and French Broad rivers, and frequent walks through forested areas of Alabama have contributed to a reawakening of my appreciation of the natural world. Ideas presented in books such as E.O. Wilson’s The Future of Life, David Suzuki and Wayne Grady’s Tree: A Life Story and The Secret Life of Water by Masaru Emoto have underscored the importance of close observation of the visual riches of nature. These are the inspiration for this body of work.”

Glenn Dasher, Somerville, AL

www.uah.edu/colleges/liberal/art/faculty/dasher/dasherpg.html

Education: Hope School of Fine Art, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, MFA Sculpture, 1983; The University of Georgia Studies Abroad Program, Cortona, Arezzo, Italy, 1979. The Lamar Dodd School of

Art, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, BFA Drawing/Painting and Sculpture 1979, BFA Printmaking 1978. Magna Cum Laude.

Glenn Dasher states, "The sculptures that I create are constructed from a variety of "traditional" materials and processes focused around fragmented stone or bronze figurative elements; pieces of broken statuary which, if left alone, evoke a sense of history, conflict, destruction, or mythology; maybe even nostalgia. These familiar forms become a starting point for the development of what could best be described as "surreal, absurd, playful, or iconoclastic monuments;" assemblages of cast, welded, forged, or found metal and carved stone, which present the fragments of human form within a more complex, contemporary, and/or elegantly formal context. In some cases, the meaning carried by the resulting assemblages are clear, at least to me; but in others, even I'm not always sure what I have said. It isn't always necessary to know the answers; but just to consider the questions."

Caroline Davis, Birmingham, AL

www.carolinedavisphotography.com/

Education: University of Alabama, Bachelor of Arts, 1986 Major: Advertising, Minor: Photography School of Visual Arts, NYC, 1987; University of Pittsburgh, Semester at Sea World Voyage, 1985 Underwater photographer, Caroline Davis, has been photographing baptisms in Alabama for a project she proposed 13 years ago, funded by two individual artist fellowship grants from the Alabama State Council of the Arts. She captures baptisms in Greene, Sumter and Hale Counties, where in these black belt counties there are more outdoor baptisms than in any other parts of Alabama or the deep South.

Caroline Davis states, "Rivers, creeks, lakes and baptismal pools of three black belt counties and four rivers running through them have drawn me back year after year to this mystical cultural area. Generations have walked down these worn paths to these rivers to repeat the ancient rite of passage - *Baptism*. The passion of my work is the continuing dialogue between light and water. The primary site for this dialogue, for me, is found in full immersion baptisms which continue to occur in the deep South. I shoot from above and below the surface of the water, inviting the viewer beneath the water's surface for a unique encounter with the baptism candidate at the moment of submersion. Ripples, reflections, light and dark intertwine to heighten the impact of the image and enthrall the viewer. Immersion provides the ultimate act of a believer's faith, as well as a means of giving up personal identity to merge with the universal whole, and in the process to gain entry into God's spiritual realm. My work has come to have the historical significance of safeguarding this imagery of a dying tradition. Church burnings, alligators, and floods have driven the people and, with them, the tradition indoors. This transition has changed my purpose from that of an artist, who set out to capture, underwater, the baptism attendants' blissful state of immersion, to that of an historian capturing the last remains of history." Davis was influenced by both her father and an African American mother-figure who, in great part, raised her. Through them, she has combined her interests in photography, scuba diving and the vanishing art of the river baptism. Her surrogate mother instilled in Davis from birth, the rhythm of southern river baptism lullabies. Her father, a World War II photographer, was the head of the U. S. Air Force Photography Department where he received a Bronze Star for his aerial photographic maps used by U. S. troops for the D-Day invasion. These two individuals formed the catalyst for Davis' eventual specialty, underwater photography and, in particular, that of the outdoor baptism. After completing her Bachelor's of Arts degree at the University of Alabama in 1986, Davis furthered her studies at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. There she held the position of assistant to world renowned photographer, Hans Neleman. Upon her return to Alabama, Davis became the preeminent river baptism photographer. "Davis' baptism compositions carefully balance light, figure and landscape. She achieves a wide range of

effects depending upon how she positions herself in relation to the water and the figures. When she is completely submerged, she achieves a calm composition that suggests peace, as in, "**And A Voice Came From Heaven: You Are My Son, Whom I Love; With You I Am Well Pleased**"...Other compositions are created when her camera is half in and half out of the water. During this process, water will sometimes splash onto her camera lens, creating a sense of water splashing up into the viewer...Davis suggests the immediacy and intimacy of a profound religious moment..." - Irja J. Thurlow, Associate Curator of Paintings and Sculpture, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts.

Dori DeCamillis, Birmingham, AL

www.reddotgallery.com

Dori DeCamillis graduated with a BFA in painting and art history from the University of Colorado, Boulder in 1987. After college she lived on the road in a vintage motor home for three years, along the way selling her artwork at outdoor festivals around the country, where her miniature paintings gained popularity and recognition. After three years of traveling she chose to settle in Birmingham, Alabama, a favorite place encountered in her travels. She exhibited her paintings in museums and galleries across the country and abroad, including a solo show at the Birmingham Museum of Art in 2000.

Dori is now co-owner of Red Dot Gallery in Birmingham, a teaching space and working studio. Her paintings have evolved into large, iconic mixed media pieces that combine oil painting on different surfaces with handmade ceramic tiles.

Dori DeCamillis states, "My work brings together layers of ornamental and realistic imagery derived from patterns and styles of different cultures and times in history. Inspiration and influences range from botanical illustration, Christian altarpieces, Mexican tile mirrors, and architectural ceramic work throughout history to Origami paper, crazy quilts, and Tibetan mandalas. The iconic presentation of my work recalls the composition of religious and spiritual imagery from all over the world down through the ages. I am fascinated with the resemblances in design and format used by societies that never came in contact with each other. Similar features of pattern, motif, and arrangement suggest a common and universal visual language. I respond to the simplicity of the radiating structure of the circular mandala, but impose my Western tendencies in the frame-like square configuration. The symmetry and predictability of the composition gives me ample opportunity to be random and intuitive within its boundaries. My central subject is most often a flower, a universal symbol representing our highest aspirations and abundance. Although the contrasts and proliferation of imagery can be busy and overwhelming, my challenge is to bring continuity to the chaos. My pieces are time-consuming and labor-intensive, embracing process for its own sake. It's always been important to me that my work be accessible to a broad audience, especially with my Exhibit A series. Because the project is a community collaboration, an esoteric, overly-conceptual approach would be lost on the people who make a big contribution to it and on the public who would be affected by it.

Russell Everett, Roanoke, AL

www.troy.edu/artdesign

Russell Everett states, "For the past twenty years I have created many drawings/paintings (portraits) depicting individual men whose visual mannerisms and postures espouse the dogmas of the various militia groups presently existing in the United States ("Alabama Militiaman"). I usually surround my subjects with symbols and icons pertaining to certain 'macho' gangs/societies, but some of them I decorate with only painted faces and 'animal blood' markings that camouflage their compulsive, violent behavior and also symbolize the constraints placed on them by a society which over the last decade has

become itself more and more violent. These men have been around for years, simultaneously contemporary ancient and primitive. In the last twenty years they seem to have created their own genre. Will they survive the gray, new, politically-correct world? Is it possible for them to transcend their volatile, cartoon world? Or a better question might be, How will the rest of us escape from them? I mean it is not the people of Iraq or Iran that will harm youit might be your next door neighbor, the people from Wal Mart, the young men driving the strip in Troy that will eventually ruin and shorten your life.

“Grandfather’s Barrell”--When I was a child my grandfather would visit us from Mississippi. He would stay for several days and he always did two things on these visits. He repaired any 'busted' steps, barn fences, garage floors, bad closing doorsanything made of wood that needed repairing and he collected all the tools my brother and I had scattered over the property, cleaned and sharpened them, and placed them with the 'business' ends pointed up and the handles downward in a large wood barrel in the garage. These axes, bush axes, hoes, shovels, swing blades, pry bars, and scythes always seemed to me an armory of medieval weapons and I think this might have been my *fust* experience with sculpture and a simple sort of visual symbolism. As I did this piece I hummed or sang badly the song *GRANDPA WAS A CARP ENTER* by the great country, surrealist composer, John Prine.

Randy Gachet, Birmingham, AL

www.southernartistry.org/randy_gachet

Randy Gachet earned a BFA, concentrating in sculpture, from Birmingham Southern College in 1987. In 2002 Gachet joined the visual arts faculty at the Alabama School of Fine Arts. Gachet’s work is consistently exhibited in galleries, non- profit spaces and museums throughout Alabama, as well as, gallery representation in Seattle, Washington and Harbert, Michigan. His sculpture has been included in the *HomeGrown Southeast Exhibit 2007* at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary in Winston-Salem, NC. Awards received include 2008-2009 Individual Artist Fellowship from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, merit awards at the 2007 & 2004 Kentuck Arts Festival, 2004 Magic City Art Connection, the *Spirit of the South Award* from the 2004 *Art with a Southern Drawl* juried exhibition at the University of Mobile and an award of merit from the 2000 *Red Clay Survey: Seventh Biennial of contemporary Southern Art* at the Huntsville Museum of Art. His work can be found in the collections of the Huntsville Museum of Art and the Southern Environmental Center at Birmingham Southern College, as well as, in private collections across the country.

Randy Gachet states, “My work involves reclamation and transformation. In late the 1990s I found myself compelled to collect jettisoned tire remnants and detritus found accumulating on urban and suburban highways. The crow, a supreme scavenger, figures prominently in this environ and subsequently in my work, simultaneously as a symbol of renewal and of fate. The crow’s ability to find sustenance in decay provides a cyclical metaphor my work revolves around. Early on, I fashioned small scale sculptures and assemblages featuring crow forms made from strips of tire evoking eeriness found in Southern narratives. As the work has evolved it has become more environmental in its concerns and its manifestation. In my process; reclamation and transformation of highway detritus serve as symbolic, redemptive gestures. Working primarily with reclaimed tire, welded steel, wire and reclaimed concrete fragments my sculptures and installations in recent years have assumed the form of whirling funnel clouds and wall like expanses of strata attended by crows; migrating groups of dome like forms suggesting turtle shells hovering slightly off walls or above floors and profusions of decaying sunflowers cascading from a dubious horn of plenty. All suggest the returning of the industrial materials to nature and imply a larger question; can art provide an impetus for creative action and collective responsibility to buffer the impact of environmental storms brewing?”

Nancy Goodman, Mobile, AL

www.southernartistry.org/nancy_goodman

Nancy Goodman is a self-taught fiber artist. The roots of her work lie in traditional quilting techniques. Over time she has adapted these techniques to create contemporary works that represent inner psychological states and emotional journeys. Nancy Goodman states, “Mourning Trilogy”: The three works offered here refer to the myriad emotions I felt upon the death of my parents. “Dry Wash Meditations” evolved out of this circumstance: My father lived on a scrappy ranch in southern New Mexico. Running through his property was a wash which was mostly dry, but on occasion after a big thunderstorm, would run with water. While we cared for my dying Dad, when not needed at the house, I would take long walks in the wash—contemplating parents and children, life and death, and loss. Keeping my eyes close to the ground, on occasion I would discover a beautiful stone. The ultimate treasure was a chip of turquoise washed down from some source upstream. Those stones are included here, along with a quilt representing the journey they represent. Alzheimer’s #1 is simply a visualization of the unpleasant chaos in the brain of an Alzheimer’s victim. It’s not meant to be pretty. “Bones” or, maybe better, *Loss*, There are three figures represented in this grave scene. My mother, my father, and me, because a part of me died too when they passed out of this world.”

Karen Graffeo, Birmingham, AL

www.karengraffeo@wikipedia

Artist Statement

Karen Graffeo states, “I have tried to pin my fears to this earth so that they will not follow me. My Mama Pearl’s church had two doors, and the men entered one door. The women entered the tiny wooden sanctuary through the other door. The preacher I remember as an angry man who referred to his sermons as *The Good News*. I most remember the sermons that explained situations that required angels to manifest themselves to mortals. The first thing an angel would shout to a person is “Fear Not”. The preacher explained it this way. “Fear Not” he yelled the words of comfort and told that the angel appeared to Mary the Virgin in her room and announced “because of your worthiness you are with child by a ravishing of the Holy Ghost”. I grew up afraid and exotic vocabulary words stayed in my curious child mind: Virgin, Ravishing, and Holy Ghost.

Another “Fear Not” sermon told about the angel manifestation that blinded the wicked Saul and transformed him from sinner Saul, to servant Paul. I feared that either sinning or sinlessness could trigger an angel to manifest.

Mama Pearl weighed 93 pounds and she died when she was 93. I imagined that she used up a pound a year until she just departed like air to her own angel incarnation. She wore dark dresses, her long white braids wrapped around her head; she did not believe in haircuts, jewelry, airplanes, or putting pictures on the wall. When I turned 12 years old, her Christmas gift to me was my own cemetery plot beside the church in Mississippi. She walked me to my plot and explained that if I accepted salvation, I would escape the mortification of the flesh and be cloaked in a glorified body that is genderless, does not dance, feel pain or eat for all of eternity. I have spent most of my life running from that hot dirt waiting beside that church in Mississippi. My constant prayer as a child was to beg God that if he thought I was

worthy that he would not send either an angel or a ravishing Holy Ghost, and if I was wicked to please not strike me blind, just tell my mother or Mama Pearl to let me know what he had on his mind.

Mama Pearl was the matriarch and the arbiter of morality for the family. After we worked in the fields she always supervised the swimming outings to the chilly Cedar Creek. The water of Cedar Creek was icy swift, and exactly the same color as root beer. She had a dependable ritual each time we were in the water. She would scold us from the sandy, rocky shore, wade in for more emphatic emphasis and then stumble all the way into the water. Once the stumbling was accomplished she would announce "Now that I am wet, I might as well swim". She swam powerfully, dark dress swirling beneath the dark water. Her braids would loosen and her white waist length hair would unravel and float on top of the water like magic snakes. She was my first angel manifestation, fully woman, human and passionately connected to the water, the earth. This sacred vision has ignited my passion for raw honest beauty, and fueled a quest to cherish each moment of this fragile human mortality.

Objects and images seem to carry spiritual import long after humans depart. So for me, making images is a way to stir the language of the angels and to try to manifest both mystery and truth.

Fear Not., Now that I have fallen into Life, I might as well swim.. Karen Graffeo

Sheila Hagler, Grand Bay, AL

www.sheilahagler.blogspot.com

Sheila Hagler states, "I live a purposeful life driven by passions of my heart. It is impossible for me to ignore the turtle crossing a four lane highway as I stop all lanes, risking my life to aid him from the treacherous trek to green grass safety. If I had a vacation, I would not take it, but would do more of the same because the most fun I have is when I work. I am an artist doing what I love, touching lives of those in need. This is my day to day. I live for the moment, always with cameras at hand, and wake every day excited about the possibilities. Now, after thirty years of making still photographs, I return to that which brought me to the darkroom: film making. Swept away by the passion of a day's work, inexorably drawn to create, defines a life well lived. My goal is to live a purposeful life. I became a still photographer thirty years ago after two years in broadcasting... After falling in love with photography, I've been in the dark ever since. Little did I know that this darkness would lead me to giving light and life to children recovering from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Immediately following Katrina, which destroyed the villages of Coden and Bayou La Batre, my students turned their cameras on the devastation. Their photographs and poems became an exhibition (*Eyes of the Storm*) that toured throughout the country.

Murray Johnston, Birmingham, AL

www.murrayjohnstonquilts.com

Wheaton College, Norton, MA, 1968-1970, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA; B.A. Art History, 1972 Workshops with Elizabeth Busch, Wendy Huhn, Yvonne Porcella, and Myers-Newbury, Michael James, Jinny Beyer, Helen Kelley.

Murray Johnston states, "There is a long history in the fiber arts of making mourning or memory textiles – they may be samplers, handkerchiefs, hangings, pillows, clothing and sometimes quilts. The quilt, "View From the Road", is a mourning quilt. I did not set out to make mourning quilts but only art quilts. However, I found that the circumstances and environment of the moment had a lot to do with what revealed itself on my work wall. I won't go into long explanations except to say that each was done immediately after the death of a parent and has meaning for me as to the life I had with them and our

conversations. I have wondered if our conversations float up into the trees as we pass and get caught there only to drift back down upon us like autumn leaves as we pass later. If we are quiet and listen closely enough we can hear snatches of them as we walk and remember. I do not come from a family of quilters, or seamstresses for that matter. I have drawn, painted, and potted through the years, received a B.A. degree in art history from Tulane University and worked at the local art museum. Fiber was not a part of my repertoire. That changed in 1980, after viewing a Smithsonian exhibit of contemporary quilts. I was enthralled and quickly taught myself how to quilt – when there were only a few books to be had in the library and even fewer classes in the area. I have studied with such nationally known teachers as Jinny Beyer, Yvonne Porcella, Jan Myers-Newbury, Michael James, Wendy Huhn and Elizabeth Busch. Currently – I explore new dimensions and challenges of quilt and fiber construction in my own studio in Alabama. My work has been in shows across the country in the last 26 years – some of these include; “American Craft Council/Southeast Regional Show Spotlight 1993; 1996; 2002 (at which I won the Charles Counts Award for Excellence in Fiber) and 2003; as well as numerous shows both solo and group in other galleries.”

Marilee Keys, St. Louis, Mo.

No web site

Marilee Keys has created a body of work that includes site-specific installations and intimate studio works. Her art evolves from her immediate environment – recycling common materials. Marilee grew up in Idaho, and has lived in LA, Seattle, Pittsburgh, Auburn, AL and St. Louis, MO. Recent exhibitions include 1708 Gallery, Richmond, VA; Jule Collins Smith Museum of Art, Auburn, AL; Emory University, Atlanta, GA; Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, GA; Huntsville Museum of Art, Huntsville, AL; The Brogan Museum of Art and Science, Tallahassee, FL; Alabama State Council on the Arts, Montgomery, AL; and Space 301 / centre for the living arts, Mobile, AL. Keys studied at the University of Utah, and the Sergei Bongart School of Art as a scholarship student.

Marilee Keys states, “I love the land. Walking on it every day slows me down. In praise of slowness...In Austria, the Society for the Deceleration of Time stops people striding too fast in town squares and makes them walk 50 meters “while steering a complicated turtle marionette across the pavement.” After living for five years in the Woods of Alabama, I recently moved to St. Louis, Mo...I dodge cars. My art continues from an ongoing search for information about my environment. The gathering and collecting of common materials recycled from nature's recycling, cover my studio walls. In this case, presents left for me by my two cats. Specifically my art is built around my concerns about sustainability and our environment. Systems, repetition, space and volume—cycles of life are all part of my work. The actual process of making something can be as important to me as the thing itself. In all of my art I am drawing, whether it is in two dimensions or three, with pine needles, rocks, photographs, shadows or paper.”

Zdenko Krtic, Auburn, AL

www.zdenkokrtic.com

Education: University of Cincinnati, OH, M.F.A., Painting; Academy Of Fine Arts, Zagreb University, Croatia, B.F.A., Painting; Major in Art History, College of Philosophy, Zagreb University, Croatia
Currently Professor of Art, Auburn University, AL, 1992-present

Material is spent light. The mountains, the earth, the streams, the air and we are all spent light. Louis Kahn

Zdenko Krtic states, "In my work, the coherent beam of laser light burns and orders the surface. Laser head dances nimbly, moving with imperceptible speed, burning lights and shadows of its digital memory into the bed of pigmented wax. It serves as a mapping device – the latest technological tool "draws" over ancient painting medium of encaustic. The images, often technical and scientific in origin, are given new life and materiality. Yet the Light, the medium that baptizes newly reconstructed image, causes its demise as well. What magically appears on the surface is short-lived, since the wax gives away, melts, and caves on itself. New fault lines appear - shifting the forms away from equilibrium. Concern in these encaustic paintings, containing burned and laser-engraved images, is with representations of human body in times of distress and recovery." A current recipient of the Alabama State Council on the Arts fellowship (2008-09), Zdenko Krtic was twice invited as a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome, Italy.

Dale Lewis, Oneonta, AL

www.dalewis.net

Dale Lewis received a BFA degree from the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, in 1962 with a Commercial Design emphasis. In 1980 he completed an MA degree in Educational Media from UAB. Further study at UAB included 18 hours of studio work and a thesis in Art Education. Beginning in 1980, He trained himself to work as a wood/furniture artist.

Lewis states, "My creations are based on furniture forms. They function as furniture, but far surpass that fundamental design. The conception of a piece, the contemplation of function, soon becomes secondary to the actual purpose of its existence. An inspiration guided by visual or verbal stimuli directs the piece through an evolutionary sequence of discovery. Extraordinary wood is the primary material of the exploratory process. I seek to create an image that is elegant, but whimsical. Each piece becomes a vehicle for a metaphorical or comedic statement. My inspirations are varied and unlimited. A chair may provide a comfortable seat, but characterize an ocean setting with seahorses, fish and seaweed. A table may display a useful surface, but sport shapely ladies's legs with shoes. A box may look suspiciously like a teapot or an exaggerated pair of lips. Shaping, carving and tinting wood with primary colors enhances the bold, caricature like features of my work. Constantly seeking refined form and compelling statement, I joyfully create unique, artistic objects." Dale Lewis presently has work in the collections of the Mobile Museum of Art, Huntsville Museum of Art and Gulf Coast Museum of Art. His pieces in public and private collections number in the hundreds. Lewis has been deemed an "Alabama Master," in the publication Alabama Masters, Artists and Their Work, published in 2008 by the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Steve Loucks, Wellington, AL

www.southernartistry.org/steve_loucks

Education: MFA ,1985 from the New York College of Ceramics at Alfred University, Alfred, NY ; BFA in 1983 from the University of Illinois at Champaign/Urbana. Loucks is a studio potter and a Full Professor in the Art Department at Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama. He has conducted numerous workshops which include Odyssey, Penland, and Arrowmont.

Steve Loucks states, "My work plays upon traditional pottery forms that transcend function while embracing it. Divided between utilitarian pottery and glorified, functional vessels, both intentions share similar sensibilities and handling of the clay. Information and ideas from one intention feeds the other. My utilitarian pottery is elegantly or whimsically designed to perform with ease and delight making the

everyday occasion a special, pleasurable experience. The glorified vessels are based upon functional pouring vessels but abandon utilitarian concerns for a sculptural approach on form, surface embellishment, and presentation. They pay homage to utilitarian pottery due to its diminishing use, roll, and importance in our present day society.”

Christopher McNulty, Auburn, AL

www.christophermcnulty.com

Education: University of Wisconsin-Madison, M.F.A. ; Lawrence University, B.A., History, cum laude; University of Michigan, Graduate study in history

“Much of our knowledge must always remain uncertain. The most we can know is in terms of probabilities.” Richard Feynman, *Lectures on Physics*.

Christopher McNulty states, “Several years ago, I consulted an actuary to determine my life expectancy. Using the probable number of days that I have left to live as my starting point, I have been making works composed of over 20,000 repetitive marks in an attempt to represent the remainder of my life and comprehend my mortality. Like unconventional calendars, these drawings and sculptures both represent time spatially and function as contemporary *vanitas*. These works continue my earlier concerns with the vulnerability of the body, and the relationship of beauty to the imperfect and contingent. In their absurd attempt to make the invisible visible, the unknowable known, and the uncertain certain, the works also address our culture’s anxiety over the future and death.”

Ted Metz, Alabaster, AL

www.montevallo.edu/art/

Ted Metz received his BFA from Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia and the MFA in sculpture from the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina. He joined the faculty at the University of Montevallo in 1973 where he continues to teach.

Ted Metz states, “The production of sculpture and the teaching of sculpture have in large measure defined my life. I am continually grateful for the satisfaction received in both pursuits. I acknowledge that as a young man it was another artist /teacher that inspired me, creatively, technically, and personally and gave me the tools to pursue my careers as sculptor and teacher. One of the works presented in this exhibition, *The Offer #2* is inspired by the dynamic relationship between the willing student / apprentice and the willing artist / teacher / mentor. Inspiration and knowledge spiral forward as the student evolves into a mentor for others. In the sculpture, the artist’s hand, in this case, my hand, is engaged with the tools and processes necessary for the production of sculpture and posed in the gentle gesture of an offer. While finely crafted, this piece lacks the finished surfaces of completion suggesting the continuous working process of sculpture production, teaching and learning.” Creatively, Metz has been successful in exhibiting his sculpture in more than 100 exhibitions, including those in Venice and Cortona, Italy, and the National Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. He has been recognized and has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and has been awarded the Visual Arts Fellowship from the State of Alabama. He continues to be a productive sculptor producing smaller indoor works while also pursuing opportunities for large public commissioned work. Metz’s public sculptures include “Becoming” for the University of Montevallo. “Diagnostic Image” for

the Health South Corporation, “Strata” for the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and “Becoming” for the City of Hoover, Alabama.

Scott Meyer, Montevallo, AL

www.montevallo.edu/art/

Scott Meyer came to ceramics through an Eastern approach to wheel-throwing skills and aesthetics, studying with Kenneth Beittel at Penn State. There, he developed a parallel interest in the relationship between material, place and imagination. In 1986 Meyer came to the University of Montevallo as an instructor in ceramics. The eclectic environment at UM encouraged Meyer to explore other approaches to ceramics and to incorporate other materials (wood, steel, bronze) into his increasingly sculptural pieces. In 2000, Meyer received a refractory materials grant valued at over \$250,000. He began construction on a series of kilns on the UM campus culminating in a forty foot anagama wood kiln. His involvement in heavy construction, the tons of raw materials, the physicality of their preparation and the alchemy of process were in many ways the last puzzle pieces serving as a vital connection between his early training and the path he took thereafter. Always an object maker, he began a series of monumental installations imbued with the transformative power of process on materials. Racks of sawed wood and stacks of bricks scared by intense heat appear in the work almost as altars upon which the line between process and product is made all but indistinguishable.

Scott Meyer states, “The relationship that exists between a location and its inhabitants fascinates me. The physical disposition of a region fosters specific and unique responses by its people (much the way specific flora is sustained by and thrives on specific terrain). Locus shapes dwelling. Dwelling shapes locus. I feel that it is in this living dialogue that the spiritual is touched. My work is about this reciprocity and its resultant spiritual dynamic. The physical disposition of most of my work defines three worlds: that below the earth (an abiding, protective, nurturing place), that on the earth’s surface (a physical record of human manipulation), and that above the earth (of the air, of smoke, of flight). The proportion of each world relative to the others varies from piece to piece. Concerning human manipulation, my recent work involves reference to crucible forms and other icons of high heat process. In that alchemical interaction, human strategy gives itself up, in part, to natural forces beyond conscious design. The forms attempt to make that dynamic palpable. There is an honesty and truth in raw unworked material and in the awesome power of natural forces it reveals. There is also honesty and truth in sensitive building and shaping, in giving form to human imagination. My work comments on both of these truths and seeks to bring them to a balance. The balance often exhibits the polar elements of weight and weightlessness, root and flower, rootedness and flight, instant and eternity. I have never been particularly interested in making qualitative judgments concerning Man’s interaction with the earth, preferring instead to record the existence of it. There is nothing, for example, more noble about a shovel than a bulldozer. Each is a tool. Though I notice in passing that with certain “high tech” tools, sensitivity is more elusive. In a portion of my work, I find inspiration in the more gross aspects of Man’s manipulations because the sense of irony is so acute. One might be impressed by the relatively puny display of power, when a road path is blasted through a mountain, and miss the surging sedimentary deposits of virtually unlimited power and age. It is technologically possible to take a core sample of earth and derive from it certain empirical truth. However, in so doing we are no closer to nor farther away from the core of physical and spiritual existence. In studying plant life we might nurture the seeds, harvest their growth or pull the plant out of the ground for study. All choices speak of the human condition. They all contain spiritual implications and provocative ironies that propel my work.”

Bobby Michelson, Birmingham, AL

www.bobbymichelson.com

Bobby Michelson's first taste of woodworking was in junior high school shop class. After receiving a B.S. in Business/Marketing from the University of Alabama, Michelson decided to try to make a living as a furniture maker. For 4 1/2 years he honed his skills at several cabinet and furniture shops in the Birmingham, Alabama area. In 1984, he opened Ramwood Furniture in a turn of the century warehouse in downtown Birmingham. He continues to create his unique furniture in the same location today. For fourteen years, Bobby exhibited his work at smaller, local art shows. In 1999, he decided to market his furniture to a national audience. Since then, he has exhibited his furniture in some of the nation's top art shows, such as Cherry Creek in Denver, Colorado, Winterpark in Orlando, Florida, Boston Mills Artfest near Cleveland, Ohio, Port Clinton in the Chicago area, Festival of the Masters in Orlando, and the Philadelphia Furniture and Furnishings Show. Bobby Michelson states, "The furniture I create is constructed from the finest hardwoods using traditional joinery. The pieces are designed with function in mind. These designs utilize forms with gentle curves and often showcase the hand cut joints. My main focus is to craft the finest pieces possible utilizing both hand and machine techniques, whichever will most efficiently achieve the desired results. My pieces are finished with a Tung Oil type finish or sprayed with an Acrylic Lacquer. As a one-man studio, I do all steps in the creation of my furniture, from choosing the rough lumber to the final finish."

Bobby Michelson has a passion for building finely crafted contemporary furniture. His motivation in designing a piece of furniture is from a craftsman's point of view. It must be functional, comfortable, and above all, constructed with integrity. Traditional joinery is the tried and true method.

Duane Paxson, Troy, AL

www.duanepaxson.com

Education: 1982 – 1984, Master of Fine Arts. University of Alabama. Sculpture Major/Ceramic Minor. 1981 – 1982, Florida State University. Sculpture/Jewelry Major, 1975 – 1980, Bachelor of Science, Troy State University, Art Major/Music Minor.

Duane Paxson states, "The first thing a human sees, before the eye and the brain can coordinate well enough to understand depth, is a silhouette. As the eye degenerates with age, depth perception is lost and thus objects again appear most strongly as thickened silhouettes. The silhouette is the first and last visual impact made of preliminary drawings featuring a strong simple outline. Using the drawing as a starting point, I combine segmented trees, vines, ceramic, steel and resin sources to indicate encumbered forms. The forms and silhouettes channel and direct the eye of the viewer. The creation of the initial form is calculated and controlled, after that the materials themselves lead to the final surface on the piece. The use of materials applied in a direct and unforced manner reveals the vitality and struggle of natural forms in isolated space. The wood, ceramic, steel and resin surfaces create an intricate, sometimes even an involuted, finish for my simple uncompromising form."

Larry Percy, Troy, AL

www.troy.edu/artdesign

"If my first dance with wet clay on the wheel was not intoxicating enough, when I discovered that this was a legal way to play with fire.....it was all over. I knew, at least in part, what my life's work was to be"- Larry Percy.

Larry Percy, artist and educator, was born and raised in Clinton, Oklahoma, a small rural town on the western Oklahoma plains. He lived two blocks off Route 66 and worked at his father's ice plant located right on 66, long before it was transformed into Interstate 40. As a young boy, he frequently traveled the famed route to northern New Mexico to a family cabin. Percy began his relationship with ceramics during his senior year at Clinton High School under art teacher Joe London. He acquired a B.S. in Art Education (1978) and a Master of Education/Art (1986) at Southwestern Oklahoma State University under Montee Hoke, acclaimed then as the "Dean of Oklahoma Potters." He earned his MFA, with honors, from the University of Kansas in 1994 where he credits Joe Zeller, David Vertacnik and Jon Swindell as being major influences. Larry also cites a George Timock workshop as being an epiphany: "I had been throwing traditional pottery and 'art pots' for sixteen years and was looking for a way to expand my visual vocabulary. Mr. Timock's use of plaster molds and the ability to articulate mass and volumes found in nature was a major turning point in my career as an artist." While Percy's roots are in wheel thrown pottery, his current body of work can best be described as 'sculptural vessels' that are inspired by visual stimuli encountered on journeys to the desert/mesa/mountain regions of the southwestern United States. "I guess that idea of journeys westward is just in my blood." Prior to arriving in Alabama, Percy spent sixteen years teaching and creating art in Oklahoma and Kansas.

Larry Percy states, "Eight thousand feet up in the mountains of northern New Mexico sits a log cabin that my great-grandfather bought in 1934. Traveling to 'Holy Ghost Canyon' from western Oklahoma where I grew up and later across the plains of Kansas was always a seminal journey for me. The transitions in the landscape from arid plains to desert to sub-alpine forest are visually fascinating and have provided much stimulus and inspiration for my work both in terms of form and concept. I realize now that those journeys carry tremendous spiritual significance in what Lucy Lippard refers to as "the restless artist's preoccupation with travel, navigation, and mapping [that] is often an attempt to address and reconcile the mythic relationship between the daily round and the road to spiritual achievement." Clay is earth and it is about journey and transformation. On a deeply personal level, the "mythic relationship between the daily round and the road to spiritual achievement" is not mythic at all, it is something that I have to constantly strive to keep in balance. This current body of work – the Kerygma Series – explores this idea of journey and its relationship to an eclectic group of concepts dealing with analogies between the elements of geological formations of earth, clay and stone and conditions of the human spirit. Ascending into the mountains and leaving behind the harshness of arid mesas is symbolic not only of physical respite from the "daily round," but spiritual transformation as well. These sculptural vessels are physically about a sense of place but also are meant to evoke a spirit of being. As C.S. Lewis' protagonist in *The Great Divorce* explains to one seeking spiritual fulfillment, "Every one of us lives only to journey further and further into the mountains."

John Phillips, Montgomery, AL
www.phillipsmetalworks.com

As a contemporary blacksmith, John Phillips has spent the last the last 20 years exploring the artistic boundaries of forged steel. His works range from lighting and furniture to large scale architectural commissions and public sculpture.

After detouring from his original plans to pursue a career in the medical field, John left college with his degree in chemistry and headed west to spend a year working on a wagon train. The wagon train traveled from Mexico to Canada and back on a year-long journey that was designed as a last resort treatment for serious juvenile delinquents. After spending 3 years traveling 12,000 miles through the

western states at 4 miles per hour, John brought his new found appreciation for blacksmithing back to Alabama and opened his shop with the idea of producing forged ironworks until he could figure out his career path.

The new career never came. 20 years later, John Phillips is settling in to his career as a contemporary blacksmith. Some of his formal accomplishments include twice receiving the Alabama Artist in Crafts Fellowship, placing several pieces in museum collections, numerous publications in books and magazine features and an upcoming segment on an Alabama Public Television production featuring Alabama craftsmen. He is currently serving as the treasurer for the Alabama Crafts Council.

John Phillips states, "Working hot steel still ignites the same passion that I felt 20 years ago when the mysterious qualities of hot iron pulled me into a career of contemporary artist-blacksmithing. I hope that my work will convey to the viewer a glimpse of the magic that the forge contains and a glimmer of the possibilities that lie in transforming cold, rigid bars of steel into warm, flowing treasures."

Amy Pleasant, Birmingham, AL

www.amypleasant.com

Education: 1999, MFA, Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA; 1994, BFA, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL

Amy Pleasant states, "Drawing is the central part of my studio practice and is at the root of all my work. I believe the closest one can get to an artist's work is through their drawings. Drawing is an intimate act and the relationship the viewer has with the work is as well. The works on paper are ink and gouache and their forms are heavily dependent on mark-making. Figures act out scenarios from everyday life. Characters argue with one another, stand on street corners, or shake out the laundry. Usually working in groups of three or more, the drawings build organically and the forms often dictate where the drawing will go and how it will end. Through painting, drawing, and wall drawing installations my work examines the complex relationships we have with one another as individuals, as a community, as a country, as a global society. The decisions we make every day whether seemingly insignificant or extremely important affect our lives and therefore the lives of those around us. Everyone's lives are changed by the people we meet and the experiences we have and my interest is in recording those moments when we collide with one another and tell the story of human experience."

Nathan Purath, York, AL

No website

Nathan Purath states, "*Inherited Identity* examines the persistent influence of an omnipresent past. Playing on ideas of home, family and childhood memories, the images create a space for dialogue between this past and the present. Rooted in a search to discover how my familial past shapes my own identity, the work is an illustration of how family stories can become personal legends."

Sonja Rieger, Birmingham, AL

<http://main.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=11807>

Sonja Rieger received her MFA from Rutgers University, her BA from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and became a Professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1979. From 1991 to

1997 she served as the Chairperson of the Department of Art and Art History. Rieger has been deemed an “Alabama Master,” in the publication Alabama Masters, Artists and Their Work, published in 2008 by the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Rieger is known for her large color photographs depicting urban Southern landscapes eerily lit by red neon lights and for a project called *Thicker Than Water*, which is a series of photographs about people who have been separated from family members at a young age and their anecdotal stories about their experience. *Thicker Than Water* is a series of anecdotal stories about people who have been separated from family members, particularly as a result of adoption. The short personal accounts explore the sense of identity that develops from living with separation as well as illustrating the strange occurrences that happen when meeting biological relatives. The subjects in *Thicker Than Water* shed light on relationships in the mix of adopted or otherwise non-related family members with those that are related by birth and biology.

Sonja Rieger states, “My interest lies in my own personal experience but has been fueled by the stories of others. The stories illuminate a larger experience by recording the details and effects of adoption and separation on the individual, the family and on remote players in the adoption circle.”

Guadalupe Robinson, Huntsville, AL

www.guadalupepots.com

Guadalupe Robinson states, “A great fascination with different color clays and the textures that can be produced with stoneware has led me to experiment with and study clays for the past twenty-five years. I was born and grew up in Mexico City, a place with strong cultural ties and great traditions. Full of sights, sounds, flavor and vigor. Looking back at what I left behind and experiencing the richness and tranquility of the Deep South have enriched my life greatly. This constantly moves my work toward blending the two cultures. Continuous respect for the material is a principal factor I try to maintain in my work. I also have a great reverence for the idea of “craftsmanship,” and this is what I aim for. My work has developed from the respect I have for clay and the joy I experience when working with it.”

Stephen Savage, Daphne, AL

www.savagepictures.com

Stephen Savage is an artist and educator. He earned a B.A. in Art History from George Washington University and a M.L.A. / Fine Art Photography from Spring Hill College. He leads several “learning to see” and alternative processes photography workshops each year and teaches photography at Spring Hill College in Mobile Alabama. His professional work has appeared in the New York Times, Washington Post, Oxford American, Garden & Gun, Washingtonian, Downbeat, Variety and others. Savage served as Director of Special Events for the National Museum of Women in the Arts and with many arts organizations: District Curators, Inc.; Washington Project for the Arts; National Association of Artist Organizations; Mobile Arts Council among others. Art in America included him in the 1985 Annual Guide to Museums, Galleries & Artists and Washington Project for the Arts in their 1980’s Decade Document.

Stephen Savage states, “It is the artist’s purpose to bring images of life to the viewer. An artist is the chronicler of his culture. His or her imagination might offer the best or worst side of life. Beauty or it’s opposite. As artists we make choices about what we want to say. I choose to photograph the commonality of the human experience with the filter of innocence. Innocence is in a constant state of discovery. The term is subjective and every viewer will bring his or her idea of what it means. My

photographs are interpretations of ordinary moments that we all know. The images in this exhibition are from a series of photographs of Baldwin County, where I live.”

Carolyn Sherer, Birmingham, AL

www.carolynshererphotography.com

Carolyn Sherer states, “The child of a teenage mother and soldier father, I was born in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in a coal mining community. However our family traveled extensively bouncing back and forth from trailers to Thailand, allowing me the perspective of the intimate insider as well as that of a distant outside visitor. A photographer, I shoot and select images intuitively, and believe that I am always seeking a sense of continuity with my family roots and a place to belong. The vision for my current work occurred spontaneously during an evening at the Birmingham Museum of Art. Arriving at dusk, I looked out the car window to the right to see families in jeans entering the jail for visitation; looking out the window on the left I saw beautiful women in furs entering the museum for a fundraising event. I felt intensely isolated and caught on the edge between powerful, conflicting forces. As I sat alone, eating gourmet grits from a martini glass at the reception a small group of men walked by and stared into the window. We made eye contact and I wondered who they were, where they were going and what judgments they might make about my life? What did I think about my life? Upstairs I previewed the exhibit of historical paintings. The large 17th century European paintings with their scale and dark muted colors were very calming. As I searched for the identity of the subjects, the images themselves seemed severe. Then entering the room of the impressionists’ work—though uncomfortable with the palette and the lack of detail, I adored the playful sense of spirit. While standing in front of Pierre Bonnard’s, “The Luncheon” a photograph of my friend dining at home appeared in my mind’s eye and I knew the muse had arrived. The photographs in this new series, Living Color, represent a search for beauty in a world of contradictions; individual stories that resonate our common humanity; and contemporary images that acknowledge the impact of painting.”

Michael Simpson, Rocky Head, SC

www.Jmichaelsimpson.org

Michael Simpson states, “As a child growing up in the flatlands of Illinois, I could step outside my door, walk straight across five miles of field and woods just to go and see what I could see. It took a lot of growing up for me to realize how important experiencing that kind of freedom and wonder was to me. Only after finishing a B.A. from Western Illinois University, 3 years with the Air Force in Germany, and an M.F.A from Illinois State University did I come to see my search for artistic identity was embedded in those moments of childhood curiosity and discovery. The connection was the Sublime; that eighteenth century aesthetic that is still evolving today. During the late 1980s I taught at Auburn University in Alabama. During that time I realized the inherent sublime qualities of white-water rivers. I sought out rivers sites all across the country. Soon I realized it was not the geography, but the incessant downstream movement of the roiling water that fascinated me. The work began to receive notice: an Alabama State Grant in Painting. A residency at the Millay Colony of the Arts, week as a visiting artist at the Arrowmont School for the Arts, placement in the collections of such corporations such as IBM, Tropicana, and First Union Bank. Eventually, career opportunities led my wife and I to the Ann Arbor area of Michigan. I maintained a

studio in a heated barn and taught fundamentals at Eastern Michigan University. Eventually, the snow got the best of us and we moved to Charlotte.”

“Since 1998 I have lived in Rock Hill, South Carolina where I maintain a studio in part supported by the Arts Council of Rock Hill. For a while I taught at Winthrop University. Now, I teach fundamentals at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Just over an hour away nestled in the Mountain Bridge area of North and South Carolina is the Upper Middle Saluda River. For the past three years I have explored this area not only for its sublimity but also as a way of bringing to attention the importance of such small watershed areas to the greater aqua sphere.

“Since Auburn my process for beginning my paintings was dependent upon photographs and slides of images of patterns of river movement. During a residency at the McColl Center for the Visual Arts (2005) this process serendipitously changed. Because a digital camera was not available, I was loaned a digital video cam. Since then I have used video projections to begin my paintings of the Saluda.

For some time I have been making oil paintings of segments of white-water rivers from nearby mountain areas. In each painting personal events in my life are associated with the geologic and hydrologic drama within these river segments. In more mature work, I discovered the sublime as a personal experience and as an artistic aesthetic. Now, I consider my paintings to be poetic metaphors for sublime moments. Certainly, my devotion to the tradition of painting, concern for the environment, and advocacy of the 'sublime' are threaded through these works. To make these concerns more apparent, I decided to focus my artistic attention on one river, the Upper Middle Saluda in northwest South Carolina.

“The name of the river comes from a group of Native Americans who briefly lived in the area before joining the Cherokee. As South Carolina's first scenic river, it has many dramatic sites worthy of the word 'sublime' as the river drops 1800 feet in a five-mile run to the Piedmont. Eventually, it serves as a watershed for a fourth of the State of South Carolina. This small reach within the Saluda watershed is not as big or romantic as the Nile. However, its health is just as important and maybe more so considering the global disappearance of surface water reserves and underground aquifers. Like so many small rivers around the world, it is more likely to be ignored if it is damaged. For me the 'local' matters. It inspires my work and makes it more meaningful.

“Digital photography, video, GPS readings, satellite images downloaded from the internet have been used to locate and explore sites along the river. This information is used as a source material to inform the paintings. Each work is a poetic interpretation of the hydrologic rhythms based on video or digital stills taken from a specific river site. My intent is to re-implace the spirit of each site by exploring its complex and dramatic rushes of water. Each piece is to be seen as much as an element in an installation as a painting in an exhibition. My hope is to extend the parameters of painting, suggest a stronger human connection to the environment, and bring to mind the power and importance of the sublime experience.”

Charles Smith, Mobile, AL

www.smith.pots.com

Education: Bishop State Jr. College-1973 (Mobile, AL); Jackson State University-1975 (Jackson, MS)

Bachelor of Science Art Education, Minor: Pottery

Smith has been deemed an “Alabama Master,” in the publication Alabama Masters, Artists and Their Work, published in 2008 by the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Charles Smith states, “I use cone 7 stoneware clay and decorate each piece using a carved-and-sgraffito technique. The style is derived

from realistic and Art Nouveau forms, mixed with and interspersed with abstract animal imagery. While the size and shape of each piece is unique, it is – and always has been – the hand-carved surface that distinguished his work. Designs used today originated in design elements first explored in the late 1970's. "They are the shapes and patterns of nature, and until Mother Nature finds it necessary to rediscover herself, I'll remain content following her lead."

Anne Howard Stagg, Tallahassee, FL

www.annestagg.com

Anne Stagg is a painter and installation artist, born in Huntsville, Alabama. She received her BA in studio art from the University of Alabama in Huntsville. During her undergraduate studies, Stagg took some engineering and math courses that in large part fueled the development and investigation of systems, organization, symmetry and mathematics that is evident in her artworks. Upon graduation, Stagg was accepted to study painting and drawing at the #8 ranked University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign on a full scholarship. While there, she studied under the tutelage of Buzz Spector, Sarah Krepp, Tim VanLaar, Laurie Hogan, and Barbara Kendrick. UIUC also provided excellent exposure to the fine arts world beyond the Midwest through their Visiting Artist Program where Stagg had individual critiques with some of the leading artists and art critics including Ann Hamilton, Eleanor Heartney, Bill Viola and Ellen Gallaher. Stagg received her MFA in painting in 1999.

Stagg received her first faculty job at the University of Alabama, Birmingham in 2000 and in 2003 she was granted an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Later that year she married and moved to San Diego where her husband, Scott Stagg completed his post-doctoral study. The expense of Southern California forced Anne to take a job as editor and graphic designer for the University of California, San Diego and cut into her time in the studio. In spite of that, Stagg has had numerous solo and group exhibitions including shows in Chicago, Birmingham, New Orleans, San Diego, Atlanta, Boca Raton, and Los Angeles. Stagg currently resides in Tallahassee, Florida where she maintains her studio and serves as the Director of the BFA Studio Art Program at Florida State University.

Scott Stephens, Birmingham, AL

www.southernartistry.org/scott_stephens

Education: 1972-76 Bachelor of Fine Arts - Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1975 Yale Summer School of Music and Art, Norfolk, Connecticut; 1976-77, Graduate Study - School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; 1977-82 Lived and worked in Birmingham, Alabama: arts administrator, set and exhibit Designer; 1982-83, Master of Fine Arts - University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; 1983-Professor of Art (1993) Chair (2008) Department of Art, University of Montevallo, Alabama -Present
Stephens has been deemed an "Alabama Master," in the publication Alabama Masters, Artists and Their Work, published in 2008 by the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Scott Stephens states, "My work is an observation of nature as well as the process of making images from it. I am interested in how the various modes of representation, from descriptive drawing to photography, interact with the abstracting effects of techniques and methods found in printmaking and digital imaging. The large cyanotypes are printed from toner wash drawing on Mylar. The cyanotype process causes a reversal of values from the drawing, creating, in essence, a negative print from a film positive. The photographic sources for these images are selected to take advantage of this value

reversal. The large plexicut prints are created with Dremel engraving on Plexiglas combined with surface textures and color flats. The image is cropped to explore pictorial effects and natural form.”

Pamela Venz, Birmingham, AL

www.bsc.edu/academics/faculty/venz-pamela.htm

Pamela Venz received her BA degree in Studio Art from The Ohio State University in 1985. Returning to Birmingham after completing her MFA, Ms. Venz began teaching as an adjunct instructor at both The University of Alabama at Birmingham and Birmingham Southern college. She joined the faculty at Birmingham Southern as a full time member in 1988 at which time she began work designing the curriculum for a new photography concentration for the BSC department of art and was awarded an Assistant Professorship. Since 2006 she has served as Chair of the Department of Art and Art History at Birmingham Southern.

Ms. Venz states, “As a photographer I am attracted to light; either the absence of it or the delicacy of it within a particular scenario. For the past decade or so I have been particularly drawn to darkness, which seems in opposition to an attraction to light, but represents in my mind a sibling relationship to it. Its mystery, its potential for metaphor, its quietness and its somberness hold my imagination in the same way that my musical tastes lean toward compositions that emphasize minor keys. I want to linger in the arena of haunting scenarios. Within these darkened landscapes of the mind I hope to pose the question; “What do you actually see, and what do you perceive in the darkness? In addition to the overt exploration of dark and light, the most recent work is a continuation of an interest in an exploratory look at home of the “domestic” environment. I do not alter the scenes, but rather intentionally seek out unintentional still-lives or tableaus as they exist within the domestic spaces. There is a formal compositional structure that is captured with the camera. But within the structural formality something is askew. Most commonly they are items of day to day activity that break against the formality of the composition and hide within the shadows or in small spaces waiting to emerge from the image after a second or third viewing. They are the details of life that we tend to overlook, those details that make life “human.”

Despite the perception of a photograph’s reality or “truth”, the mechanical act of photographing a scene changes it. It is that change and its cloak of believability that I find fascinating about photography and that brings me back time and again to the mundane activities of home. There is a hidden richness there; quiet and unassuming revealed through light and shadow.”

Rachel Wright, Mobile, AL

www.rachelwright.net

Everybody’s got a body, but few of us take the time to contemplate what is beneath the surface of our skin. For centuries, physicians and artists have attempted to make sense of the complexities hidden inside. Early anatomical illustrations are often a mixture of correct and incorrect assumptions. Some artists rely on metaphor rather than verisimilitude. The Dream Anatomy series explore these imagined realms inside the body. Because these garments are meant to be worn, the boundary between the internal and the external is blurred. The invisible is made visible: wear your inside on the outside. By using women’s slips and nighties, articles that were not originally intended for public life, I am playing with the line between the public and the private arenas. Most of the garments and fabrics I use come from thrift stores and garage sales. If you look carefully, you will find stains and worn areas: vestiges of a previous life. I am fascinated by the emotional patina that accompanies cast-offs. I choose to recycle worn garments because our bodies also bear the marks of our daily lives, both externally and internally.

The Haeckel Dress was inspired by the 19th century naturalist Ernst Haeckel and his illustration of a kind of mushroom called a stinkhorn fungus. The skirt and jacket are constructed out of recycled polyethylene foam.

A catalogue of the exhibition on thumb drive is available and is also viewable on line at tpcac.org. For more information on the artists in this exhibition, please visit their individual websites.

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www.tpcac.org**