

WORK BY SELF-TAUGHT ARTISTS, PAINTINGS BY MERNET LARSEN, AND VIDEO AND SCULPTURE BY SHANA MOULTON ENLIVEN THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG

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St. Petersburg, Fla.—The MFA draws on its impressive collection of work by Southern self-taught artists in *From the Heart: Folk Art on Paper*. This choice exhibition in the second-floor Works on Paper Gallery opens Saturday, August 6, and continues through Sunday, November 13.

Martha and Jim Sweeny, who have given 34 works in this genre to the MFA, are the exhibition sponsors, and the *Tampa Bay Times* is the Media Sponsor. **Curator of Contemporary Art Katherine Pill selected the works and will present a Gallery Talk on Sunday, August 7, at 3 p.m.**

From the Heart features exceptional examples by such gifted artists as Bill Traylor, Thornton Dial, Nellie Mae Rowe, Lonnie Holley, Juanita Rogers, Purvis Young, and Dilmus Hall. Many works would look completely at home alongside those by twentieth-century and contemporary masters with more formal training.

Bill Traylor's journey is especially poignant. An illiterate freed slave in Alabama, he began to draw in 1939 at 83. Traylor (1854-1949) was encouraged by a young trained artist, Charles Shannon, who helped him buy materials and started preserving his work.

Traylor's spare drawings grew out of a lifetime of memories and reveal a gifted use of space and geometric forms. He is now one of our most respected self-taught artists, and his work is part of such collections as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. *From the Heart* includes a rare drawing of an owl by Traylor.

Because many self-taught artists live in rural settings, both real and imaginary animals frequently appear, as in Nellie Mae Rowe's paintings and drawings. So, too, do explorations of religion and spirituality, prominent in the work of Roger Rice and Dilmus Hall (1900-1987). Scholars have traced some elements to African spiritual traditions and imagery.

The magnificent work of Thornton Dial Sr. (1928-2016) was selected for the 2000 Whitney Biennial and has been featured in solo shows at some of our leading museums. Michael Kimmelman wrote in the *New York Times* that "...his energy and fluent line, abstracted in maelstroms of color, easily call to mind Pollock and de Kooning." Although formal aspects of Mr. Dial's work can be seen as relating to Abstract Expressionism, it is important to note his dedication to creating art that addressed such social issues as poverty and racism.

Purvis Young (1943-2010) is one of Florida's best-known artists. While in prison, Mr. Young spent his time devouring art books in the library. Upon his return to the gritty Overtown neighborhood of Miami, he began to paint, draw, and to produce mixed-media works. His

extensive oeuvre encompasses urban landscapes, singing angels, portraits of musicians and people in his neighborhood, wild horses, which for him symbolize freedom, and more. His signature wavy lines can suggest people, as well as currents of energy. Mr. Young is represented in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.; and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, among others.

From the Heart: Folk Art on Paper invites visitors into realms never to be forgotten. Katherine Pill brings a fresh perspective to a genre which is now recognized as a compelling contribution to American art and culture.

**SPOTLIGHT EXHIBITION: Vantage Points: Paintings by Mernet Larsen
Lee Malone Gallery, Now through Sunday, October 30**

Mernet Larsen (born in 1940) works in an abstract, yet narrative style, and her technical accomplishment and unique sense of perspective have earned her increasing critical attention. The respected critic and poet John Yau has written that “Mernet Larsen’s paintings do not resemble anyone else’s. They are a complete world and, in that regard, belong to the tradition that includes Giorgio de Chirico and René Magritte...They adhere to their own logic and follow their own rules.”

Ms. Larsen will discuss the paintings on view in this exhibition, as well as others that have marked her development, in a lecture on Thursday, September 15, at 6:30 p.m. Her lecture is free with Museum admission, which is only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursdays. The first monograph on her work, with full-page reproductions and an essay by Mr. Yau, is available in the Museum Store.

In 2000, Ms. Larsen entered a phase of her career deemed Geometric Figuration. She brings a contemporary perspective to fifteenth-century Italian painting in which figures are placed within highly detailed architectural spaces. Perspective is complex, even challenged. The narratives are not easily read.

Ms. Larsen has written that “I try to evoke a sense of permanence, solidity, weight: time stopped, essences of ordinary events made tangible. As if I were leaving this life and had to take with me only a few very concrete images, filtered through wry detachment.”

From 1967-2003, Ms. Larsen taught at the University of South Florida, Tampa and is now Professor Emeritus. She has had more than 25 solo exhibitions in museums and galleries, and her paintings have been included in group shows at White Cube in London; the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C.; the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York; and The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota. She has been the subject of retrospectives at the Museum of Art—Deland (Florida) in 1992 and the Morean Arts Center in St. Petersburg in 2010.

Her work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The MFA, St. Petersburg is proud to have four impressive paintings by Ms. Larsen due to the generosity of Eric Lang Peterson and Michael Graham.

She holds her BFA from the University of Florida and her MFA from Indiana University Bloomington and is the recipient of numerous grants and awards. She is represented by the James Cohan Gallery in New York.

**ALSO ON VIEW: Shana Moulton: Journeys Out of the Body
Hazel Hough Wing, Now through Sunday, October 8**

Shana Moulton (born in 1976) explores our obsession with self-help fads and wellness therapies, as well as consumer culture as a whole. She primarily uses video, with her alter ego Cynthia, who rarely speaks, as the protagonist.

The MFA is featuring all nine installments of her *Whispering Pines* series, as well as other videos, sculpture, costumes, and an opera/performance piece. Though Ms. Moulton has received many solo exhibitions in galleries and has been selected for a wealth of group shows, this is her first solo museum project in the United States.

On Thursday, October 6, at 7 p.m., *Whispering Pines 10*, a one-act live-performance video opera, will be presented in the Marly Room. Backed by Nick Hallett's libretto and score, Ms. Moulton will bring Cynthia to life in a contemporary take on the "mad scene," with accompaniment by a female vocalist. The opera is free with Museum admission, which is only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursday.

CINEMA AT THE MFA, exploring themes in *Shana Moulton: Journeys Out of the Body* FREE with MFA admission: Only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursday. Complimentary snacks. Co-hosted by The Filmmers Guild. Panel discussions, moderated by Founder and Creative Director Allie Gemmill, will follow each film.

Thursday, July 21, 6 p.m. *Safe* (1995), directed by Todd Haynes.

Oscar-winner Julianne Moore gives a breakthrough performance as Carol White, a Los Angeles housewife in the late 1980s who suffers from a debilitating illness. After doctors cannot provide a clear diagnosis, she begins to believe that she has extreme environmental allergies. This profoundly unsettling work functions on multiple levels: as a prescient commentary on self-help culture, as a metaphor for the AIDS crisis, as a drama about class and social estrangement, and as a horror film about what you cannot see. *Safe* was named the best film of the 1990s in a *Village Voice* poll of more than 50 critics.

Thursday, August 18, 6 p.m. *Daisies* (1966), directed by Věra Chytilová.

This absurdist farce follows the misadventures of two brash young women. Believing the world to be "spoiled," they embark on a series of pranks in which nothing—food, clothes, men,

war—is taken seriously. *Daisies* is an aesthetically and politically adventurous film, widely considered one of the great works of feminist cinema.

Thursday, September 29, 6 p.m. *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye* (2011), directed by Marie Losier.

In 2000, British performance artist and musician Genesis began a series of sex reassignment surgeries in order to more closely resemble his love Lady Jaye (née Jacqueline Breyer), who remained his wife and artistic partner for nearly 15 years. It was the ultimate act of devotion and Genesis' most subversive performance to date. He changed genders in a triumphant act of artistic self-expression. Genesis called this project, "Creating the Pandrogyné," an attempt to deconstruct two individual identities through the creation of an indivisible third. Marie Losier crafts a labyrinthine *mise-en-scène* of interviews, home movies, and performance footage.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive N.E. has a world-class collection, with works by Monet, Gauguin, Renoir, Morisot, Cézanne, Rodin, O'Keeffe, Willem de Kooning, and many other great artists. Also displayed are ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, and Native American art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast.

Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, until 8 p.m. on Thursday, and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. **Admission is only \$5 after 5 p.m. on Thursday.** Regular admission is \$17 for adults, \$15 for those 65 and older, and \$10 for students seven and older, including college students with current I.D. Children under seven and Museum members are admitted free. Groups of 10 or more adults pay only \$12 per person and children \$4 each with prior reservations. The MFA Café is open from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. For more information, please call 727.896.2667 or visit www.mfastpete.org.