

ISSUE

THE ARTS MAGAZINE OF THE ART STUDIO, INC.

FEBRUARY 2011



**CLASSICAL STYLE,
MODERN TWIST**

PAGE 8

INSIDE:
BEAUX ARTS BALL IN PICTURES,
GOING TO THE DOGS,
'ART' AT BCP, AND MORE.



From: beauxartsball

still in two minds about it all
but sure about studio membership



SEE MEMBERSHIP FORM ON PAGE 3.



ISSUE Vol. 17, No. 5

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The ISSUE is a monthly publication of The Art Studio, Inc. Its mission is to publicize The Art Studio and its tenants, and to promote the growth of the arts in Southeast Texas. ISSUE is also charged with informing TASI members of projects, progress, achievements and setbacks in TASI's well-being. Further, ISSUE strives to promote and distribute the writings of local authors in its "Thoughtcrime" feature.

ISSUE is provided free of charge to members of TASI and is also available, free of charge, at more than 30 locations in Southeast Texas.

Regular features include local artists of note and reputation who are not currently exhibiting at TASI; artists currently or soon to be exhibiting at TASI; instructional articles for artists; news stories regarding the state of TASI's organization; and arts news features dealing with general philosophical issues of interest to artists.

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Cover photograph of Amelia Wiggins
by Andy Coughlan

A View From The Top

Greg Busceme, TASI Director



IT WAS THIS TIME of year in 1984 that we made our first foray into the unknown.

The Art Studio came to life in an old building called the Jackson Casket Company, 1076 Neches St. across from the City Bus Terminal, two blocks down and one over from our present location.

There were no dead bodies on the premises, just the fine detailing of caskets for the dearly departed and the creepy tufted lining that surrounds our loved ones in the surreal fabric of death. For a while the idea that we call The Studio the Jackson Casket Company held some momentum, but it was decided that people wouldn't get it.

And so, under pressure to the organization for the state nonprofit corporation certificate, I hurriedly wrote "Art Studio, Inc." I wasn't sure if we wanted "The" or not but ultimately we use it more than not.

It was a 5,000 square feet, single story warehouse with several small rooms that once served as kitchen, locker rooms and showers. Those ultimately became clay mixing, glaze room, kitchen/bathroom, darkroom and kiln pad. The rest of the building became the gallery and student area, a small, partitioned office and space for five lucky artists.

It had another history before the

Casket Co. After WWII, it was established as the southside sub-station for the United States Post Office, picking up the overflow of mail after the war and during the boom. Remains of this era were a secret set of walkways that one could climb up through a secret entrance and spy on the workers throughout the facility. The only places that could not be seen were the stalls in the restrooms. The floors were padded and allowed the spy to observe at anytime with no one's knowledge. We found it very intriguing and it was part of the mystique of The Studio.

The main mystique is that we were located downtown, an unheard of venture for the art business. DOWNTOWN?! And yes, there were hookers along Neches St. and junkies and all sorts of down and outs.

We welcomed them into The Studio too. Some became part of my family, my Studio family. I was once stopped by the "ladies" when they heard my son was born and blocked my path to see him. Some girls had children and they came to The Studio to take clay workshops and other classes. These were our first customers.

When MLK came through, Neches

See VIEW on page 15

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS AT THE ART STUDIO

FEBRUARY

"Figuring the Feminine" Paintings by Amelia Wiggins
Opening February 5

MARCH

"Art of Craft" by Fu Lien
Opening March 5

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ART STUDIO

Membership in The Art Studio, Inc., provides invitations to all exhibitions and one year of ISSUE, the monthly arts magazine of The Art Studio. It also gives free eligibility for members to enter the annual membership art exhibition (TASIMJAE) and participate in various exhibitions throughout the year.



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IMAGINARIUM

THIS YEAR'S BEAUX ARTS Ball certainly lived up to its theme. Imaginations ran riot as attendees dressed up in all manner of garb, from high society to some low places — and everything in between.

A large crowd packed the American Legion Hall, Jan. 22, as The Art Studio held its annual fundraiser.

A silent auction drew many bids as an eclectic, mix of art and donated objets d'art were available.

Music was provided by the Prime Time Band who supplied a mix of classic soul and

dance music which really brought the funk.

Performance artists swung lighted hoola hoops and flaming boleros to entertain the crowd.

The event would not have been possible without the help of a variety of donors.

At press time, totals were still being tallied and donations were still being totted up. For a complete wrap, see the March ISSUE.

And make plans to attend next year's shindig. It's never too late to get your costume started.



ISSUE photos by Andy Coughlan, except main photo by Matt Billiot

GOING TO THE DOGS

SMITS RAISES QUESTIONS OF RELIGION'S ROLE IN 21ST CENTURY

“To me, a piece really ‘works’ if it unlocks something the viewer knew, but only at an unconscious level. And for that, you have to reveal your vulnerabilities. Also to yourself.”

Maria Smits, interview with art critic Koos Tuitjer, 2009.

Commentary by
Elena
Ivanova

IN OCTOBER OF 1993, I saw the famous altarpiece by the brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck at St. Bavon (St. Baaf's) Cathedral in Ghent. In fact, the altarpiece was the reason for my trip to Belgium. “You have a one day visa,” I was told at the Benelux¹ consulate in

Hamburg. “You must leave no later than twenty-four hours after you cross the border.” For holders of the red hammer-and-sickled passport the consequences of breaking this law was quite serious: incarceration until the Russian authorities bail you out followed by a humiliating homecoming. I gleefully nodded my acknowledgement of the rules and set off on my journey.

Eight hours after crossing the border I was in St. Bavon's cathedral. I had twenty minutes to take in the breathtaking beauty of the van Eyck brothers' masterpiece. Although the cathedral stays open for the evening mass, the section with van Eyck's altarpiece promptly closes at 5 p.m. to avoid the disruption of the service by art-obsessed tourists. All this journey for twenty minutes of solitary contemplation of one of the greatest art works of all times...

In December of 2008, Dutch artist Maria Smits was contemplating the same beautiful vision. “This magnificent altarpiece overwhelmed me by their [sic] clearness in meaning and form. ...The ideas of heavenly and earthly life in this polyptic altarpiece have become the framework for my own ideas about hierarchy and religion,” wrote Smits in her artist statement for the exhibition “Adoration of the Mystic Dog” at Lawndale Art Center in Houston.

I believe that a truly profound response to a work of art can be best expressed in the form of another work of art, be it a painting, a poem or a musical piece. So I was thrilled by the prospect of seeing Maria Smits's interpretation of the fifteenth century art work.

“Adoration of the Mystic Lamb,” completed in 1432, was inspired by the passage in the Book of Revelation in which the Lamb is a metaphor for the risen Christ. St. John the Baptist describes countless worshippers who are crying out, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12.) The repeated invocation of Christ as the Lamb of God became part of the Mass since the seventh century.³

The altarpiece's central panel almost literally follows this description. In the middle of the verdant



Hubert and Jan van Eyck, **ADORATION OF THE MYSTIC LAMB**, 1432

meadow, elevated on the altar, is the serene and majestic Lamb. The worshippers, arranged in neat groups and as immobile as the clusters of trees in the distance, gaze in quiet adoration at the blood flowing from the Lamb's neck into the chalice. The scene is surreal and dreamlike.

The thing I remember most about the altarpiece is the shimmering light emanating from the bright colors and dazzling contrasts of red, green and gold. Heaven and earth are united in a harmonious, albeit strictly hierarchical, universe. Each of the characters occupies a specific place. Christ the King, Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist in the upper tier of panels benevolently preside over the earthly realm — worshippers, knights, pilgrims and judges — in the lower tier.

This solemn mood is interrupted by the startling nude images of Adam and Eve on two side panels. Painted almost life-size and with unabashed truthfulness, they look like two naked people ready to step off the panel. To increase this amazing trompe-l'oeil effect, Adam's right foot is painted hovering over the edge of the niche. Even a modern viewer, who is no novice to nudity in art, may feel ill at ease looking at Eve's bloated belly or Adam's huge hand covering his genitalia. Imagine how these figures affected the fifteenth-century Flemish who had never seen nude images before and associated nudity irrevocably with sin and eternal damnation⁴.

Lawndale Art Center was quiet on the Saturday afternoon and, like many years earlier in in St. Bavon's, I was again contemplating the altarpiece, this time the one created by a twenty-first-century artist. Maria Smits studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in The

Hague and it was in that city that she had maintained her studio before coming to the United States. Smits and the van Eyck brothers share the same place of origin, the Netherlands, although in time they are separated by almost six hundred years. Bloody social upheavals and a relentless scrutiny of the critical mind shattered the idea of a harmonious hierarchy between heaven and earth. What do we believe in today?

“In “The Adoration of the Mystic Dog” I question the importance of the role of Christian religion in our contemporary culture, questioning the hierarchy of men and God,” says Smits. Her work is built on polarities which she identifies at the beginning of her Statement: dog=god, white=black, shadow=light, night=day.

Unlike the van Eycks's altarpiece, Smits work is black and white. The artist kept the proportions and shape of the original, except for the panels representing Adam and Eve, which are significantly larger. Painted on paper in charcoal and oil bar, the work gives an impression of the images drawn and then erased. This is an altarpiece of shadows, in which the niches once filled with bright and detailed images are now void. It is up to the viewer to provide the vision and the meaning.

Some images, although still maintaining an abstract form, step off the painted surface and become tangible. The central image of Smits's altarpiece is the sculpture of the Madonna made of plastic, rubber, and Styrofoam. Weighing under 0.03 ounces, this fragile figure symbolizes the non-materialistic spirit. It is placed under a

See **DOG** on page 10



Serge (Glenn Teeter), left, shows off his acquisition to Yvan (Keith Huckabay) and Marc (David Hooker) during a scene from BCP's “Art.” The show begins Feb. 11 at the Betty Greenberg Center for the Performing Arts.

BUT IS IT ‘ART’?

BCP to present Tony-award winning play in February

Story by
Lluvia
Rueda

Photo by
Andy
Coughlan

IT SEEMED TO BE a fairly innocuous purchase. An abstract painting: white lines, white background, white canvas. Not the sort of thing you would write home about. But somehow, its clean edges draw a dividing line between a longtime friendship and the vague definition of art.

So goes the premise of “Art,” a three-man play written by French

playwright Yasmina Reza and translated by Christopher Hampton.

“It's a dark comedy that draws the audience in by making them reflect on their own life choices,” said director Michael K. Saar.

The plot revolves around new art owner Serge, who is enamored of his latest acquisition; a large, abstract painting consisting of, well, white. His confidant, Marc, is appalled by its claim to art and its ostentatious price tag. His reactions set off a comedic look at relationships gone wrong, while belittled friend and peacemaker Yvan tries to keep the group together.

Saar, a New York native and newcomer to the Beaumont Community Players, said he fell in love with the dialogue when he first encountered the script.

WHEN:
February 11, 12, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26 at 7:30 p.m.
February 19 at 2 p.m.

WHERE:
Beaumont Community Players
Betty Greenberg Center for Performing Arts
4155 Laurel Ave. in Beaumont

RATING:
‘R’ - For strong language and adult situations

TICKETS:
Adult - \$24 • Senior (65+) - \$22 • Student (13-21) - \$22

“It was just a very funny, enjoyable comedy, and also really deals with questions about friendship, such as: Why are we friends with the people we are friends with, and why do we maintain friendships even though we change over time?” said Saar.

Although this is the first time Saar has stepped onto

See **‘ART’** on page 15

Panel discussion set for Feb. 26

A panel discussion and talkback will be held at 9 p.m., following the Feb. 26 performance of “Art” at the Betty Greenberg Center for the Performing Arts.

The discussion, which is open to anyone, not just those in the audience for that evening's production, will focus on the themes of the play and the nature of art in general.

Joining actors David Hooker, Keith Huckabay and Glenn Teeter will be director Michael K. Saar. Also on the panel are Dr. Judith Sebesta, professor, and chair of the department of theatre & dance at Lamar University, Dr. Kevin Dodson and Dr. Elena Ivanova, chief educator of the Stark Museum of Art in Orange. The moderator will be Andy Coughlan.

Admission for the discussion is free and audience members are invited to ask questions.

OLD-FASHIONED modern GIRL

ARTIST FUSES CONTEMPORARY SENSIBILITIES WITH CLASSICAL STYLE



Story and photos by Andy Coughlan

AMELIA WIGGINS SITS in the corner of her small apartment, sunlight from the window illuminating her canvas as she paints, her blonde hair pulled back with a few loose strands framing her face. The lighting and setting is reminiscent of a Vermeer painting. But a closer look reveals an anachronistic element. To Amelia's left is a laptop computer, a high-definition photo — her subject — staring out.

This contrast of classical and modern is evident in her work, examples of which will be on display at The Art Studio, Inc. in February. Amelia's show, "Figuring the Feminine," will open with a free reception Feb. 5, and will run through Feb. 26.

"I love painting the figure," Amelia says. "I've always loved figure drawing. I've been going to life model sessions since 5th grade. My mom was a fashion designer in New York for a while and I think her love of the figure has come to me.

"I paint a few landscapes, but it's really about the figure, for sure."

The last four years, she has been exploring issues of women, and issues of femininity and the male gaze.

"A lot of that comes out of my art history studies," she says.

A native of Cape Elizabeth, Maine, she spent a year in France studying and exploring before graduating from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2008.

"(The trip) is probably where the roots of this started," she says.

Her parents are both artists. Her father is an illustrator and creative designer, her mother is a painter and fashion designer.

"They tried their hardest to convince me to go on another path but I was stubborn," Amelia says, laughing. "But my parents are very happy for me now that I actually have a job out of art school."

She is currently Educator for Public Programs at the Stark Museum of Art in Orange. In the fall, Amelia will attend grad school at the Bank Street College of Art in New York while continuing to work at the museum.

In an age where abstraction seemingly rules in tandem with multimedia conceptual art, Amelia seems almost from another age. Her carefully rendered figures reflect her studies in art history. It is a contradiction of which she is fully aware.

"I tried not to paint that way for a while in art school," she says. "I tried conceptual art, I painted abstractly for a while, but with parents roots as illustrators — growing up with N.C. Wyeth and John Singer Sargent all the time — it's really in me.

"Part of why I paint the figure is trying to work through the images that I grew up with and my aesthetic tastes. Trying to figure out where my love for these Singer Sargent paintings — you know, they are all old white women just sitting in a chair with their puppy dog — just seeing those as a child, it's really part of me."

Amelia says she is inspired by any of the great illustrators. She also mentions American illustrator Howard Pyle who founded his own school of illustration art, and whose students included N.C. Wyeth.

She said she responds to illustration and to the way women are depicted, either as pure illustration or in the treatment of wealthy patrons — "the romantic, basically."

"I feel that I both love that and also resist it," Amelia says. "I love putting beautiful flowing curls of hair and lustrous locks on my women, but at the same time, I see the fakeness. That's why I try to bring in contemporary details like painting someone's fingernails bright pink or building ten-

sion by packing the composition with people all the way to the edges.

"I like walking the line that way. I like adding elements that are awkward or make people question."

Her painting "Reading Room," which was part of The Art Studio's membership show in April, is a good example. The painting is classically inspired, yet is obviously contemporary.

Her women are passive subjects, beautiful. But Amelia says she is ambivalent toward these images.

"I have a passion for these beautiful paintings of women who are often sex objects, or at the least, passive," she says. "I love them and think they are beautiful, but at the same time my more critical, feminist mind says, 'Hold on.'"

"But I'm a painter and I'm a woman, so just the fact that I am painting is a reversal."

In her most recent paintings, her tondos, she is moving away from the women as sex object or object of the male gaze — she sees them as allegory, as angel, as muse.

"Still sentimental images," she says, "yet sweeter. I'm not quite as critical of them. I'm not thinking of Victoria's Secret."

The round tondos feature women who are on the floor, staring directly out at the viewer.

"I want the viewer to be unsure if they are dreaming or gazing or taking a nap — that line between beauty and, Oh, she's dead," she says. "They are not dead, but the angelic has to do with death — it has another side."

Amelia said she doesn't see the paintings as spiritual.

"I am interested in a woman who is awake and looking at you versus one who is looking away from the viewer and we can just stare at her versus a woman who is non-existent and not living," she says. "I'm interested in how that changes her and how she becomes more or less objectified based on that."

This echoes Manet's "Olympia" which caused a sensation when it was first exhibited. The idea of a nude staring out at the viewer was considered vulgar.

Amelia considers herself a feminist, although it may not be obvious at first glance of her dreamy classical females.

"I took lots of feminist classes in school and I am very much into the feminist art movement," she says. "In this series it would be very easy for someone to say I am an anti-feminist. And I am, to a certain degree, embracing the sex values of our culture. I'm resisting them and critiquing them, but this is me working through these ideas.

"They are very seductive ideas and I am seduced by them."

Looking at Amelia's work, one is confronted with the question of beauty. If one celebrates beauty, must it necessarily be accompanied by objectification?

"I am making these paintings for me," she says.

She sees her art as a reworking of the classical, male representations of the female, such as Michelangelo's "Madonna" — a round painting.

"I saw it in Florence and it happened to be in that circular format and for three years it's been stuck in my head," she says. "So even simple things like that, I have to have a way to process my own aesthetic taste — whatever grabs me — and to reinterpret that.

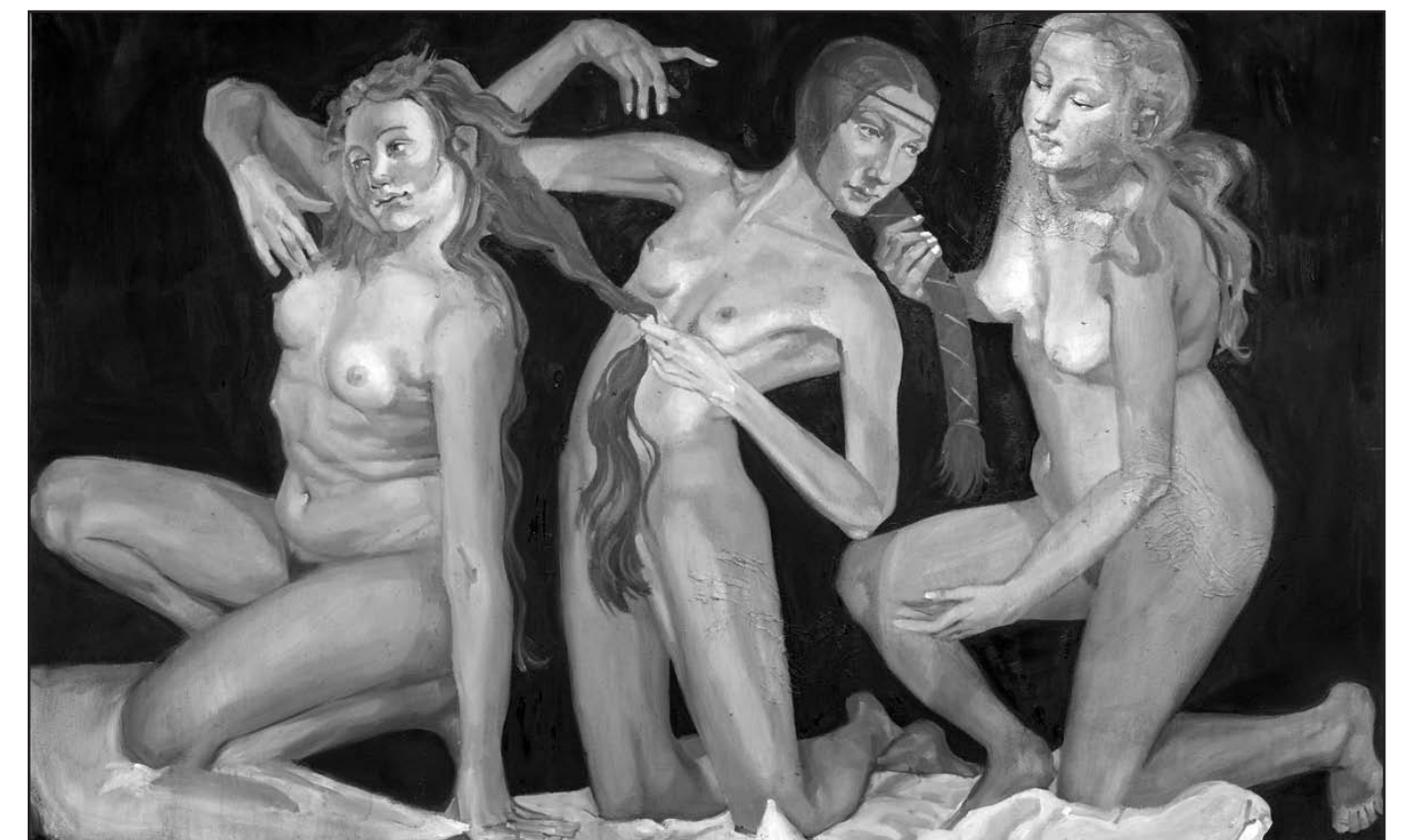
"Writing a paper on feminism is something else. I'm not always being the perfect critic — I don't always have rational thoughts that add up to something."

Amelia is also a throwback in her love of oil. In these days of acrylic and fast media, oil painters are almost old fashioned.



"Tondo I" by Amelia Wiggins

See WIGGINS on page 11



Amelia Wiggins, left, works in her apartment on a tondo. "History Painting I," above, will be among her paintings on display in February.

'How in a world gilt with love May I thank you above this human cadence'

Studio to host open show inspired by poem

THE ART STUDIO, INC. is offering artists an opportunity to participate in a group show in October. Artists are invited to produce a piece inspired by the lines:

**How in a world gilt with love
May I thank you above this human cadence**

This will also be the title of the show.

"For several years we have played with the idea of a group show where all the work is inspired by a common theme or idea," tenant Andy Coughlan said. "The schedule worked such that we could finally do it, with enough lead time for people to produce the work."

Elizabeth French, TASI assistant director, said

the lines are by long-time Studio member George Wentz, a well-known artist and poet, who died last year.

"George submitted poems to the ISSUE consistently since it was first published," French said. "It seemed appropriate to use something he wrote."

Artists are asked to commit to entry by June 1, with the work to be delivered to The Art Studio by Sept. 1. There is no cost to enter the show, but entrants are expected to be members of The Art Studio. Memberships begin at \$35 per year. Memberships should be purchased by June.

"We want the contributors to have plenty of time to really think about what they want to do, how the words resonate with them," French said. "But we

also need to plan ahead so we can work out the space. That's why we are asking for artists to commit in June."

In order to have a consistent theme, 2-dimensional work should not exceed 24x30 inches. Sculptures should not exceed 30 inches in any direction. Limit one piece per person.

"This is really an exciting project," Coughlan said. "Art is such a subjective thing and I expect a really diverse body of work, one that will illustrate the wide variety of styles and interpretations that are possible."

The lines were selected to afford the widest possible interpretations.

For more information, call 409-838-5393.

DOG from page 6

glass cover, looking like a saintly relic displayed in a precious reliquary.

This ethereal image is confronted with a gigantic sculpture titled Dog which is positioned in the center of the gallery facing the altarpiece. The creature looks more like a mythological chimera, a hybrid that defies identification, than a dog. Although made of the same light-weight materials, it looks heavy and, strangely for an abstract piece, anatomically detailed. One critic compared Smits's sculptures to "anatomical figures which were an essential tool for classical artists and medical practitioners: the figures that exposed the anatomy of muscle beneath the skin."

If Dog equals God in Smits' symbolic system, the twenty-first century God must be the god of recycling.

The canine imagery permeates Smits's work. Since God/Dog created man in his image, there is no surprise that Adam and Eve are portrayed with canine heads and paws. Their figures loom large on each side of the altarpiece, to emphasize "the importance and influence of humans is our world." The lineage of the various breeds of the dog family tree is superimposed over the paintings of the panels, the circles simultaneously looking like the planets in the solar system.

While The Altarpiece acts mostly as a "tabula rasa" waiting to be filled with the viewer's own thoughts, another work in the exhibition titled, "The Adoration of the Mystic Dog," offers an insight into the artist's mind. Comprised of sixty smaller panels and arranged in tiers, it is the artist's vision of the world developed in reference to the van Eyck brothers' harmo-

nious hierarchy portrayed in their 1432 altarpiece. The dichotomy of heaven and earth is still present, although the upper tier panels originally occupied by Christ, Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist are empty. Floating beneath them is planet Earth represented by the continents which are identified only by name. The earthly life is shown as a series of panels containing fragments of barely recognizable objects, such as dog's limbs morphing into the arms of Adam and Eve or an outline of a dead dog. "Going to the Dogs" reads an inscription on one of the panels. "Think" reads another one.

Nothing is fixed and immutable in Smits's interpretation of van Eyck's altarpiece, she engages the viewer in a constant exploration and re-thinking of the medieval masterpiece as well as the world around us. As she expressed in an interview, "My ultimate dream is that my work sparks something off in people — that they recognize something in it. But it's also a way for me to try to grasp the essence of what intrigues me, By making work you discover things you hadn't been aware of."

¹The Benelux is an economic union in Western Europe that comprises three neighboring countries, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

²Maria Smits, Statement for the exhibition "Adoration of the Mystic Dog," Lawndale Art Center, Houston, Nov. 19, 2010-Jan. 16, 2011.

³Susan Benofy, Adoremus Bulletin, Online Edition - Vol. VIII, No. 9: December 2002 - January 2003

⁴The van Eyck's altarpiece is considered to be the earliest example of nudity in Flemish art.

⁵Maria Smits, Statement.
⁶J. Bolten-Rempt, Bare Existence exhibition catalogue, 2009.

⁷Maria Smits, Statement for the exhibition "Adoration of the Mystic Dog," Lawndale Art Center, Houston, Nov. 19, 2010 - Jan. 16, 2011.

⁸Koos Tuijter, interview with Maria Smith in: Bare Existence, exhibition catalogue, 2009.



Maria Smits, **THE MYSTIC DOG**, 2010. Polystyrene, foam rubber and plastic binders
Courtesy of the Artist

Film, music fest set for Feb. 25-26

The date of the annual Boomtown Film and Music Festival has been moved to Feb. 25-26 from late Spring. Festival organizers hope that scheduling the event within the school semester will encourage greater student involvement. 2011 will mark the volunteer-run festival's fourth year in Southeast Texas.

Each year "BoomFest" showcases dozens of musical acts in downtown Beaumont and screens scores of independent films. According to Christopher Dombrosky, the festival's film programmer, they've received entries from all over the world for this year's event, including countries such as Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, India, Israel, and many more.

A pledge drive is currently underway to raise funds for the

non-profit festival at Kickstarter.com, an online site devoted to supporting community arts projects. In addition, a festival preview night is being planned for early February that will also serve as a benefit to raise funds. The festival preview will be open to the public and free to attend. It will also coincide with the kick-off of a 48 Hour Video Race that Lamar University's Communications Department is hosting as part of BoomFest 2011.

A line-up for the 2011 Boomtown Film and Music Festival has yet to be announced, but information on bands that will perform, films that will be screened and special guest speakers will be posted in the coming weeks on www.boomtownfestival.com.



Amelia Wiggins at work in her apartment.

WIGGINS from page 6

"There is a sensuous flesh tone that you can only get with oils — and the smell and everything else" she says. "The problem of color, and specifically flesh tones, will be the best problem I ever have to solve for the rest of my life. I just find it incredibly interesting and I always will. The backgrounds, I get so annoyed with every time I have to paint them. I just want to paint flesh."

Amelia is a contradiction. She straddles the line between classical and modern. She is almost old-fashioned in her approach, yet she is also a vibrant, modern young woman. It is a contradiction she recognizes and embraces.

"I went to an art school with a very strong painting tradition," she says. "I got interested in contemporary art there and in feminist theory, and in more modern,

conceptual theories. But at the same time, I was painting the figure four days a week. And I loved that."

"I want to keep painting open — I don't want these to be literal translations of what is in my head," she said.

Amelia says she wants to know the viewer's reaction to her work.

"I am offering them seductive images that will make them want to look longer and to make them question," she says.

Amelia's models are usually friends. Allison Evans works with Amelia at the Stark Museum, where she is the registrar, and is featured in several works in the show, including "The Reading Room."

"I like to help out my friends," Allison says, "Although I haven't modeled nude, yet."

Amelia jumps in quickly.

"I am obsessed with Allison," she says, "because her skin tones are translucent with blue tinges."

"That's the first time anyone has commented on my skin," Allison laughs, adding, "I am intrigued by how people see features I have lived with my entire life."

While Amelia has painted from life, she works from photographs now because it allows her some flexibility around her work schedule. It can be a problem coordinating schedules with her models.

"I know the limitations of photography," Amelia says. "I try hard to be painterly, I don't want it to look like a photograph. I like to see the work in the piece. It is important to leave it impressionistic and loose."

Visitors to "Figuring the Feminine" are invited to walk the line between modern and classical; between the feminine Romantic and the empowered feminist.

It is a line Amelia Wiggins straddles with confidence.

For more information, call 409-838-5393.

Around & About

If you come across any interesting exhibitions, museums or other places on your travels, share them with us. Call 409-838-5393, or contact us through our web site at www.artstudio.org. Be sure to include the location and dates of the subject, as well as any costs.

The **MERCHANT SOIREE** is a monthly traveling art sale that circulates to different locations around Southeast Texas.

Each month merchants sell handmade, refashioned, and reworked creations.

The next event is scheduled for Feb. 10 from 5-9 p.m. at The Art Studio, Inc.

The soiree will feature musical guests We Were Wolves.

Admission is free.

For more information, contact Larena Head at 409-951-0961.

LAMAR UNIVERSITY THEATRE will inaugurate its **BARD ON THE BAYOU SERIES** Feb. 17-20 with William Shakespeare's **THE TEMPEST**. Billed "Short Shakespeare," this fantastical adaptation by Don Fleming is designed for young audiences and adults (middle school age and older) and will run about an hour.

Widely recognized as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage, "The Tempest" depicts the adventures of the powerful magician Prospero, banished by his brothers from Italy to live on an island with his daughter, Miranda; his servant, Caliban; and his helpful spirit, Ariel. Complications ensue when a ship carrying Italian royalty, including his brothers, crashes on the island.

Guest artist Nathanael Johnson, a Yale graduate

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and professional Los Angeles-based actor, will direct the production, with scenic design by multiple-Tony Award-winning guest artist Scott Pask. Pask's Broadway design credits include such shows as "The Wedding Singer," "Urinetown" and the revivals of "La Cage aux Folles," "Little Shop of Horrors" and "Hair."

Performances will be at 7:30 p.m., Feb. 17-19, with matinees at 2 p.m., Feb. 19 and 20 and a special school performance at 10 a.m., Feb. 18 in the University Theatre, 4400 S., Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway on the Lamar campus in Beaumont.

Tickets are priced at \$10 for general admission; \$7 for senior citizens, LU faculty/staff; and \$5 for LU students.

For reservations, call 409-880-2250.

The **STARK MUSEUM OF ART** in Orange will host the exhibit **LANDS FIT FOR THE CAMEL: IMAGES FROM THE MEXICAN BOUNDARY SURVEYS**. This exhibit explores landscape imagery resulting from the United States War with Mexico of 1846-1848 and the resulting boundary surveys. Sketches in oil and illustrations in rare books, which documented additions to the United States territory in southwestern North America, will be on display. The exhibit will be on view through April 16.

"Warfare, art and science came together in the mid-nineteenth century. The United States and Mexico fought over territory, but these lands were not well known. To collect scientific information, the Army assigned topographical engineers and a civilian artist to collect data as military troops marched from New Mexico to California," Sarah Boehme, Stark Museum director, said.

The exhibit features six oil sketches by artist John Mix Stanley who accompanied the United States Army of the West. Stanley's paintings were used as illustrations for the published report by Lieut. Col. William H. Emory, Notes of a Military Reconnaissance from

Fort Leavenworth, in Missouri, to San Diego, in California, which is included in the exhibit.

After the war, the boundary surveys also included the collecting of scientific information and visual imagery of the geography, minerals, plants and animals of the region. Two illustrated publications resulting from the surveys will be included in the exhibit. Boundary commissioner John Russell Bartlett published his Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua, Connected with the United States and Mexican Boundary Commission, During the Years 1850, '51, '52, and '53. William H. Emory served as author for the official government publication. Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey.

"We invite visitors to experience this moment of history. This exhibit takes us back to a time when the United States had expansionist plans to span the continent. The government, however, did not know a great deal about the unfamiliar desert lands and needed information about what was there and how to approach it," Boehme said.

Commissioner Bartlett, after surveying in the desert, wrote a chapter in his book recommending the importation of camels for transportation use in the American Southwest. He wrote, "There are peculiarities in the arid plains and deserts of North America which seem to fit them for the habits of the camel." The United States Army did briefly bring camels to North America to cope with the difficulties of travel across desert lands.

The exhibit includes an education area with an interactive puzzle and children's books. Visitors can learn about camels and their role in United States history.

The museum is located at 712 Green Avenue in Orange. Admission is free.

For more information call 409-886-ARTS (2787) or visit www.starkmuseum.org.



Gobi the camel was an object of curiosity during the Stark Museum of Art family day. Jan. 22. The event was held in conjunction with the exhibit "Lands Fit For The Camel: Images From The Mexican Boundary Surveys," on display through April 16.

ISSUE photo by Andy Coughlan

Untitled

Little steam flows far
Slow fire cooks long
feeling in its oldest form
like the fine snow, line after line

Jade

Une Lutte Dans Le Jardin

This one is true.
Or (to pervert Marianne Moore's dictum)
a real dream with an imaginary rodent in it.

I saw the bête noire at the boundary of the vegetable garden, near a wounded tomato vine. He wanted to retreat to his burrow but a length of stray cord was wrapped around his neck. Could I free him or should I kill him? Then I saw the mother cat and her (large!) kitten. The kitten pounced on the rodent's neck, drawing blood. Somehow, during the thrashing, the rodent extricated himself from cat and cord and slid into the burrow.

The vulnerability of the rodent was no sign of inherent weakness. Perhaps my carelessness or that of another human on the place was to blame. I was relieved to witness the rodent's escape.

Rev. Kevin L. Badeaux

For Kitty, the Karaoke Queen

The G above *middle C* I owned
when I was young and full of speed
is lost to time and nicotine:

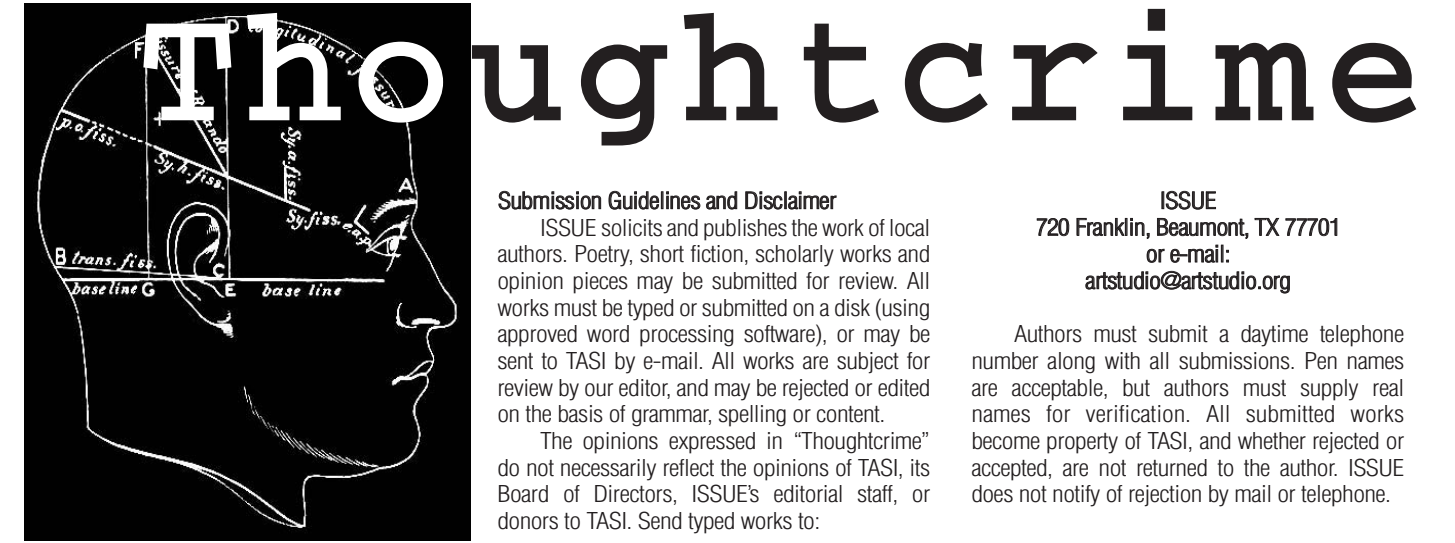
If you love me, it's not for my high notes.
Tight eyes,
brazen in their distance, regard the bar:
the swollen angel spilling off her stool;
the callow boy beside you, wringing hope
from every knowing look
and desperate flirting touch —

*He was alright, for a while...
Now he's crying,
Crying...*

— over you:
who deigns to drink our mortal beer
and breathe our common air. Tonight you'll slum
and think of one
who wouldn't be caught dead in here.
Soon your eyes will meet and he'll succumb:

Infect him with your swollen misery;
explode his body, in your own sweet time —
Go and scratch at his back door
after you've left mine.

Chad Belyeu



Submission Guidelines and Disclaimer

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Authors must submit a daytime telephone number along with all submissions. Pen names are acceptable, but authors must supply real names for verification. All submitted works become property of TASI, and whether rejected or accepted, are not returned to the author. ISSUE does not notify of rejection by mail or telephone.

Fragments From An Abandoned Poem

One by one they disappeared,
They, who would be obstacles to dreams.
The man in the pince nez and the talking cat
Smooth the path for fantasies fulfilled.
But the maid is the key.

Looking down he drowns in pools of green.
Each time seeing his reflection
Abstracted by waves of melancholy.

Blowing on a dandelion he makes a wish
He knows will never come true.

Not dead, but sleeping,
Pining for the broken pencil
Which renders perfection in absence
Of colors drawn in white.

As the sun sets on the Empire he sits,
The red dusky sky framing spiky silhouettes,
His fingers wrap around the stem
Of the glass of blood red wine,
Unable to speak, staring into the distance
Wondering if the world is real,
Or an illusion not of his making.

Andy Coughlan

An Agnostic Acrostic to a Former Eleanor Poetry Award Winner

Did she change the bread and wine?
Each, reverently, save me,
Believed and took it for a sign.
Blood and body, all agree,
Inside her loaves of line.

Eucharistic poetry?

Like Tom, there is a doubt of mine,
Yearning to be free.
Not until thy wound I see
(And seeing so define)
Not until I enter thee
do I dare say, "Divine!"

Jesse Doiron

Audubon on the Purple Grackle

The corn rows are ripe
with ochre and ashes.
Countless crows shake the field
with their calls while laying waste
to the crop in a sharp-billed early harvest.

Months before they saved farmers the labor
of plucking grubs from the new growth,
but country men are quick to forget favors,
so Elijah, the planter's youngest son,
stands beside me, the both of us armed
for our own harvest.

We have different aims:
Elijah wants to plump pot pies with gristle,
and I wish to pin wings
forever on the page.

I know the art isn't the animal,
and their shapes will come out crooked
and nefarious, their feathers robbed
of the coppery hue of sunshine,
but we are all greedy beasts,
this boy, these birds, and me.

Killing them isn't much of a sport.
I once saw a cockeyed ploughman
split six in a shot.
They are black air when gathered like this.
It seems a crime to clear them.

I always cringe when the first one falls,
but Elijah is ecstatic.
His laughter sounds like their language,
wild and questioning

My rifle's report bursts the flock
into the shadow of itself.
The mates answer in a tongue of jagged stones.

Jason Duncan



Dishman reveals collaborative friendship

Review by
Andy
Coughlan

WHEN JUSTIN VARNER AND Jakob Christmas were students at Lamar's Art Department, their teacher was Steve Hodges. As the pair's career progressed, that relationship turned to friendship, one that allowed the three of them to exchange ideas and philosophies. The relationship changed from master and students, to one of friends and equals. It was a

relationship that each valued and used to explore ideas that progressed their respective works.

Hodges died in August, but Varner and Christmas continue to work, and in doing so, Hodges' legacy lives in the three-man show "The Specious Instant," on display at the Dishman Art Museum through Feb. 18.

Hodges casts a long shadow over the show, not just by his loss, but for the quality of the work. The old master, even toward the end of his life — all of the work in the show was completed in the past three years — knew the tricks of the trade. The younger pair are excellent in their own right and it is no criticism to acknowledge their debt to Hodges.

During a reception Jan. 14, the pair noted that, "Steve is both with us in his works, and also in his absence." The show reflects what the collaborative process means in a field that is often solitary in nature.

Varner, Christmas and Hodges would send each other images to discuss. Through this process, they pushed each other in new directions. All three artists share a common goal to challenge the viewer in a way that is both inviting and confrontational.

Together, they said, they were able to bring a lot of energy to their work. Varner and Christmas said they believe the show represents some of the best work of their careers so far, reflecting a support and friendly oneness.

Varner and Christmas revealed that each had shifted their work radically over the past few years. Varner, who is now teaching drawing at Lamar, was primarily an abstract painter. When he moved back to Southeast Texas after graduate school, he visited Hodges' home in Port Arthur. He said it was not only his life that changed radically. He was inspired by the urban grittiness of the graffiti

he encountered around Hodges' home, and sought to find a way to connect with the area and the people there.

His new work features a series of charcoal drawings that seem to fuse urban sensibilities with echoes of German expressionism. The twisted figures have a contemporary immediacy that fascinates. "Birth of Appossum: Cynthia" features a woman who is at once both beautiful and ugly — in the way that black and white photos of urban decay and squalor have beauty.

Boston-based Christmas, on the other hand, shifted from photo-based naturalism to a hybrid of pop art and abstract expressionism. Christmas said that while in graduate school in Iowa, he found himself floundering and sought a process that was fast, simple and direct. He said that all of his pieces were completed in two to four hours. Maybe because of the process, the collection is slightly uneven, but each piece has its own appeal. Some incorporate type or have crude figurative elements (crudity, it should be stressed, that is deliberate and is backed with the skills of an accomplished technician). Others are simply abstract. The two-panel "Narcissus" and the three-paneled "Black Comedy" evoke the spirit of the American abstract expressionist Robert Motherwell. They are bold and exciting, and the process allows Christmas to present images that are both somber and spontaneous at the same time. Christmas' collection allows the viewer a glimpse at his process and a sense of the power of "play."

The young artists said that Hodges taught them how to rebel and follow their gut. Without his pushing, they said they would not have moved on as they have.

Hodges' work retains the freshness and intelligence that viewers have come to expect. Several of the pieces refer to classical imagery. Varner said that whenever Hodges had a problem he needed to solve, he would copy something. He would work his problem out through examining the archetypes of Greek or Egyptian art.

"The Specious Instant" is a fine tribute to Hodges as an artist, as a teacher, and as a friend. That his legacy continues in Varner and Christmas is fitting. Even without his collaboration, one feels they will continue to push the boundaries of their art.

The exhibition is on display through Feb. 18. The Dishman Art Museum is located on the corner of E. Lavaca and MLK Pkwy., on the Lamar University campus.



Mission Statement

Founded in 1983, The Art Studio, Inc. is devoted to: providing opportunities for interaction between the public and the Southeast Texas community of artists; furnishing affordable studio space to originating artists of every medium; promoting cultural growth and diversity of all art forms in Southeast Texas; and providing art educational opportunities to everyone, of every age, regardless of income level, race, national origin, sex or religion.

PURPOSE

The purpose of The Art Studio, Inc. is to (1) provide educational opportunities between the general public and the community of artists and (2) to offer sustained support for the artist by operating a non-profit cooperative to provide studio space and exhibition space to working artists and crafts people, and to provide an area for group work sessions for those artists and crafts people to jointly offer their labor, ideas, and enthusiasm to each other.

GOALS

1. To present public exhibitions
2. To provide educational opportunities
3. To provide accessible equipment for artists
4. To provide peer feedback through association with other artists and crafts people

OBJECTIVES

1. To present 10 art exhibitions per year
2. To maintain equipment for artists in a safe working environment
3. To provide better access to artists for the public
4. To offer regularly scheduled adult and children's classes
5. To develop and maintain public activities with all sectors of the community
6. To develop and maintain equipment to aid artists in their work
7. To provide a display retail outlet for artists
8. To expand programming and activities with increased facility space

SOUTHEAST TEXAS Arts COUNCIL This project is funded in part by the Texas Commission on the Arts, Dishman Trust, Entergy, HEB, and the Vic Rogers Foundation through the Southeast Texas Arts Council

VIEW from page 3

Street was abandoned and the girls scattered.

There was one more history, obscure but for the decorative friezes on the outside wall — a shield with a winged tire on it. Not a modern tire, but a narrow-spoked tire of the 1910s and '20s from the B.F. Goodrich tire company. This was an early tire center, in the heart of bustling downtown just over from the trolley car on Royal Street.

From B.F. Goodrich to southside substation to Jackson Casket company to The Art Studio.

Six years went by and the empty space we walked into was full to the max and bursting at the seams, we pulled up stakes and went to the White House Department Store. After we moved, about five years or so, the original building was torn down for industrial growth. The old building served its occupants honorably and I think The Studio gave it its last hurrah.

VANDALISM REPORT — On Dec. 9 I received a call from my good friend Sandi Laurette with bad news — the water spigot in front of the building was spewing water. Not a leak, but spewing and when I arrived that's what I saw. Spraying about twenty feet and over the shut off valve. With damp feet and pants, I finally got it turned off. The plumbers came and made fast work of our repairs. Two days without water, plumbers, and a water bill which was close to \$300 — and we spent nearly \$500 because someone wanted the copper off our building. We never found the faucet in question. Vandalism is no stranger to us, but I am infinitely amazed at how huge an impact a small theft can have on a little organization like us. We thought you would like to know.

ART from page 7

the BCP stage as a director, it's not his first time leading a production.

The reference librarian and Lamar associate professor, who has a bachelor's in directing and a master's in theater, has honed his acting skills since high school. With five directing notches in his belt since then, Saar said that he can truly appreciate the privilege of working with experienced cast and crew, which include actors Glenn Teeter, David Hooker and Keith Huckabay, as well as assistant director Gina Hinson and stage manager Karen Corwin.

Saar, who also participated in BCP's "Chicago," in 2010, said that he was impressed with the theater's strong link to the community.

"They have all worked together before and are just a really talented group of people. I think that the audience will really appreciate their work. As a director, I just want to make people laugh, make people think and just put on a really good production that they really enjoy seeing," Saar said.

Actors Hooker and Huckabay agreed. "I am very excited about this play," said Huckabay, a Beaumont resident and veteran BCP actor.

"I would like to see people come away from it understanding how much work true friendship takes and that we sometimes find the craziest things to fight about, but the problems usual-

ly...really stem from deeper misunderstandings. It's important to understand," Huckabay said.

"It was funny, smart and just gives us (the actors) the chance to have the audience focus on the situations that come up on stage. There are no extras, there's no music, there's no dancing or elaborate costumes. Just ideas and ... really good acting. I just couldn't miss this opportunity," laughed Hooker, an associate professor for the department of English and Humanities at Lamar Institute of Technology.

Hooker, who worked as an actor for the Dallas Theatre and with the Alpha Omega Players in Fort Worth, plays the antagonist and long-time friend, Marc, whose initial disapproval of the artistic investment draws the trio into an emotional downward spiral.

"I don't really see Marc as being an antagonist per se, but more as a realist. He sees his friend making this purchase of over 50,000 dollars and sees it as a financial drawback and tries to protect his friend," Hooker said.

Either way, friends and BCP fans alike will be able to enjoy "Art" at the Betty Greenberg Center for the Performing Arts, located on 4155 Laurel Ave. in Beaumont.

The play will run from Feb. 11-26. Ticket prices range from \$12 for children ages 1-12, \$22 for seniors and ages 13-21 and \$24 for adults.

For more information about the play, call 409-833-4664 or go online to www.beaumontcommunityplayers.com.



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- 'ART' AT BCP

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FIGURING THE FEMININE

PAINTINGS BY AMELIA WIGGINS

FEBRUARY 5

GALLERY RECEPTION IS 7-10 P.M.



SOUTHEAST TEXAS



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