

IRELAND REGNIER

Paintings: A Retrospective (1944-2011)

January 17 - February 16, 2012

Clemson University

Lee Gallery

Artist reception

Thursday, January 19

6 - 8 pm

This exhibition showcases a selection of work spanning over sixty years by retired Clemson University painting faculty Ireland Regnier.

Regnier's art career began with a portrait of a young soldier he drew while in combat in the south pacific during World War II.

These selected paintings explore landscapes, seascapes, birds in flight and stormy skies inspired by Regnier's own personal experiences.

www.clemson.edu/cva || 864-656-3883

facebook.com/clemsonvisualarts || visualarts@clemson.edu



CLEMSON
ART

CENTER FOR VISUAL ARTS
AT CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Clemson University in Clemson, SC, Features Works by Ireland Regnier

Clemson University in Clemson, SC, will present the exhibit, *Ireland Regnier Paintings: A Retrospective (1944 – 2011)*, on view in the Lee Gallery from Jan. 17 through Feb. 16, 2012. A reception will be held on Jan. 19, from 6-8pm.

Cigarettes might have saved Ireland Regnier's life.

While serving in New Guinea during World War II, Regnier recalls being separated from his unit one day while out looking for wood. Following the sounds of chopping, Regnier crested a vine-covered hill only to realize that the sounds weren't from his fellow soldiers but from the New Guinea natives. The chopping stopped, leaving the jungle in silence as they stared at one another. Regnier recalls that the natives would scale a tree to loose a coconut, even taking the trouble to crack it, in exchange for a single cigarette. Luckily, he had a fortune in his pocket. He slowly produced his full pack of cigarettes and tossed it over, instantly becoming the natives' best friend, and to them, the richest man in the country. They pointed around the bend in the direction of Regnier's companions and he was on his way.



Work by Ireland Regnier

"Regnier shared this story with me when I met him recently, but take a second to google 'Ireland Regnier'," said Kevin Human, Information Director, Center for Visual Arts at Clemson University.

The results you get will be sparse at best, Page 18 - Carolina Arts, January 2012

inaccurate at worst. After spending time in the home of this World War II veteran and Clemson University professor emeritus, it soon becomes clear that he doesn't mind. This is unfortunate, because he may be the most unique, prolific South Carolina artist that you've never heard of.

Joined by his wife, Linda, and his long-time friend and fellow Clemson professor emeritus, John Bednar, Regnier seems more interested in the newcomer in his home near the Clemson campus than talking about himself. He asks me a series of questions about where I grew up, a tiny South Carolina town with which he is familiar, and we discuss the merits of living in a village with a single stoplight.

Originally from Texarkana along the Texas/Arkansas border, Regnier is no stranger to southern hospitality, but as our time together goes on, his apathy towards his own self-importance is revealed to be more than a veiled faux geniality.

Scanning his living room, he points out the Bronze Star he received for his heroism in the Pacific Theatre.

"I wasn't a warrior. I did my job," states Regnier.

Regnier was drafted right out of high school. He was a machine gunner.

"I didn't like it. I didn't hate. I didn't hate the Japanese. I was timid in a lot of ways. I was backward in a lot of ways."

When asked about several other medals that accompany the Bronze Star, he is casually dismissive, downplaying the significance of "some beachhead medals," not because of the aloofness that often comes with old age (Regnier is 86), but rather a genuine disinterest.

Regnier is similarly dismissive of would-be artists. "Some people have been put on a pedestal to the point where people think they're omnipotent. They're just artists."

But Regnier is more than "just an artist." *continued above on next column to the right*

After the war, Regnier graduated art school and found work drafting and rendering for various architectural firms. For him, it was his way to pay the bills. His love was painting - not for just anyone, but for himself.

Inspired by the work of early American modern artist John Marin, Regnier dove into the world of abstraction, creating paintings that are personally unique. "I repeat motifs, like landscapes, but in a different way. Like when you see a landscape and you go back to it a week later. It's different."



Work by Ireland Regnier

Denise Detrich, director of the Clemson's Lee Gallery, notes that Regnier's work stands apart from the romantic, awe-inspiring projections of traditional landscapes. "Regnier finds the beauty not in the grandiose, but the simplicity of light and sky, of being struck by the little spots in everyday life. His landscapes speak to a greater perspective on painting and on life."

After teaching night classes at the St. Petersburg Junior College in Florida, Regnier made the move to Clemson. He began teaching painting in 1961 in what was then the School of Architecture, before the university had an official department of art.

John Bednar was instinctively attracted to Regnier's work. "When you recognize a work of art, your life is improved in some way."

"And you don't forget that," Regnier interjects, a rare occurrence of fervor in his voice.

"Artist is an overused word. I may not be an artist. It's not important unless it lives through time."

Regnier certainly is off to a good start,

with a body of work that begins in 1944 and continues through present day.

His last major exhibition was in 1988 to commemorate his retirement from the university. He had anticipated that retirement would give him the opportunity to paint full time. Indeed, he had more time to think about what he wanted to do, but thinking more and doing less made Regnier listless.

"I'd go so long without painting I'd get blue. The most down I've ever been was when the painting wasn't going so well."

But when his wife retired three years ago, something clicked, and his work took off again.

When asked how many paintings he has completed in his career, he pauses to think.

"Lots."

"Thousands," assures Bednar.

With such a prolific portfolio, it should come as no surprise that Regnier has produced work that he is not particularly fond of. So he got rid of it.

He recalls one afternoon years ago when he stacked his unsatisfactory works into a heaping pile and burned them in his backyard. Not thinking about the oils in the paint, the smoke billowed up in a massive black plume as his discarded work disappeared to the ultimate turpentine. Just like the transient beauty lost to the landscape, they were gone.

"My life has been painting. We'll see if it's called art in the future. That's what I'm interested in."

For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Lee Gallery at 864/656-3883 or visit www.clemson.edu/caah/leegallery/.



The Artist's Coop
on the square
An Artist's Cooperative

113 East Laurens Street
Laurens, SC • 864-984-9359
10-5:30pm Tues. - Fri., 10-3pm Sat.
www.laurensartistscoop.org
Laurensartistscoop@backroads.net