

Some Exhibits That Are Still On View

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Work by Hiroshi Sueyoshi

Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, NC. For further information call the Museum at 910/395-5999 or visit (www.cameronartmuseum.org).



Work by Chester Arnold at Brookgreen Gardens

Brookgreen Gardens in Pawleys Island, SC, is presenting *Environmental Impact*, a cutting edge art exhibition that is touring museums throughout the United States. The purpose of the exhibition is two-fold: 1) to recognize, document, and share the work of leading contemporary artists who choose to focus their art on local and global environmental issues; and 2) to heighten public awareness and concern about the degradation of diverse environments. The exhibition will be on view daily in the Rainey Sculpture Pavilion through Apr. 26, 2015. The 75 paintings, photographs, prints, installations, and sculptures confront issues such as the over-development of land, dangers of nuclear energy, and

impact of global warming. For further information call the Gardens at 843/235-6000 or visit (www.brookgreen.org).



"Magnolia Grandiflora," by Anna Heyward-Taylor, from The Wright Collection of Southern Art on view at the Florence County Museum.

The Florence County Museum in Florence, SC, is presenting "Selections-from-the-Wright-Collection-of-Southern-Art", on view through Jan. 1, 2016. This exhibition features thirty works from the Florence County Museum's recently acquired Wright Collection of Southern Art. In its entirety, The Wright Collection of Southern Art features 141 works collected over 45 years by former Florence pathologist, Dr. Louis Wright. The collection was developed around the recognition of Southern Art as a viable facet of American expression and cultural development. It encompasses art produced over a 153-year period, from 1852 to 2005. At its center is work by noted artists like Thomas Hart Benton, Alfred Hutty, Helen Hyde, Florence native artist, William Henry Johnson, Alice Huger Smith, Anna Heyward Taylor, Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, Palmer Schoppe, Mary Whyte, & Stephen Scott Young. Also on view through Oct. 5, 2015 is "William H. Johnson: New Beginnings," featuring twenty one works from the life of Florence native, William Henry Johnson (1901-1970) selected from the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Florence Museum Board of Trustees, the Johnson Collection, and a private collector in Denmark. For further information call the Museum at 843/676-1200 or visit (www.flocomuseum.org).

Isn't it possible that if browsers were engaged in an informative discussion about the art, they might become collectors?

I appreciate being acknowledged by a staff member when I enter a gallery. It lets me know someone is available to answer any questions I may have. Then, like many others, I prefer to view the exhibition without being interrupted. But there is a difference between 'left alone' and 'ignored' Nothing is more insulting than being completely dismissed by art gallery staff (Shop Assistants?).

More than once I've entered a gallery, picked up a catalogue, viewed the exhibits, made annotations in a notebook, all the while unacknowledged by the gallery attendant, who is usually busy on the phone or computer. Even more frustrating is being in an unattended gallery and hearing laughter or banter coming from in the stock room.

Quite the opposite occurs if the staff member knows I'm an art journalist. Then it's all smiles and 'Have a seat, would you like a cup of tea?' I am sure the same attention is given to any recognized collector who steps into the gallery. But it's not good enough. Everyone who comes through the door should be treated with equal courtesy.

I recall how once, after entering a gallery to review an exhibition, the owner gave me a warm welcome then left me to do my work while she attended to some duty in the stock room. Shortly after she disappeared three people entered the gallery. The first, a middle aged woman, did a slow walk around, examined each exhibit, then left. Perhaps she was just looking but I do wonder if she would have stayed longer, or considered a purchase, had she been greeted on entry, or if a staff member was available. Then a thirty-something couple arrived. They spent time viewing all the exhibits but returned to a certain painting more than once to discuss it quietly. He waited by the desk with catalogue in hand for a while but when no one appeared, they left. Was a sale lost or will

they come back later? About forty-five minutes after my arrival, my notes completed, I left. In all that time the gallery was unattended while the owner was 'out the back'. (PS like most 'open' galleries, this one has a 'beeper' that sounds in the back room when anyone walks in the front door.)

Yes, I do understand that running a commercial gallery involves a great deal more than just sitting in a space filled with pretty pictures. I do realize it is a hectic business where the staff must juggle three different sets of paperwork for current, previous, and future shows all at once. I do know that organizing an art exhibition is difficult at best and even more vexing when deadlines are not met or when more/less exhibits than expected arrive, some still wet others damaged. Then there are the egos and insecurities to contend with at every turn, I'm talking collectors as well as artists here. Still, if the operative word is 'commercial' then the art gallery is a specialty store, a business, and as such should be run like one.

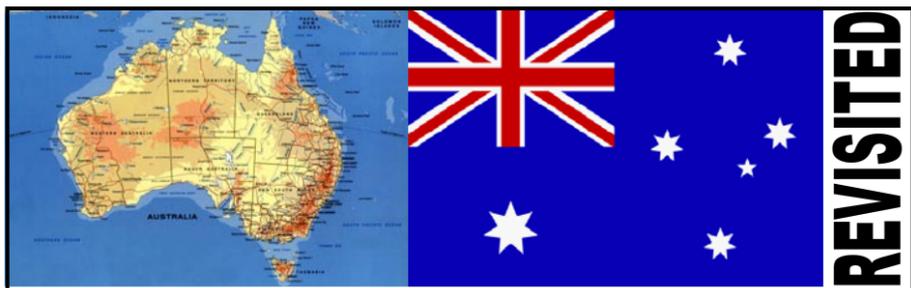
I can only assume the reason some fine art galleries don't act like a Fine Art Shop is the snob factor. They wouldn't want to be confused with retail interior decorators. But then, I know a few good decorator stores that have lasted a lot longer than many a snobby commercial art gallery.

Judith McGrath lives in Kalamunda, Western Australia, 25 minutes east of Perth. She received a BA in Fine Art and History from the University of Western Australia. McGrath lectured in Art History and Visual Literacy at various colleges around the Perth area, and was an art reviewer for *The Sunday Times* and *The Western Review* both published in the Perth area. McGrath was also a freelance writer and reviewer for various art magazines in Australia. She also co-ordinated the web site *Art Seen in Western Australia* found at

(<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/tep/25381>).

McGrath is currently enjoying retirement.

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A Few Words From Down Under

Editor's Note: Judith McGrath contributed her writings about exhibits and events taking place in Western Australia to *Carolina Arts* for about a decade. Although she was writing about events taking place thousands and thousands of miles away, they seemed relevant to what was going on here in the Carolinas. Her contributions were very popular when we first ran them and continue to be popular on our website's archives. We've decided to revisit them from time to time.

A Few Words From Down Under The Fine Art Shop

by Judith McGrath, first run in our August Issue 2007

Ran into an old art journalist friend of mine the other day and after completing the pleasantries, we began discussing changes in the local art scene. I was amazed his complaints were not for the crop of new art practitioners, rather the attitudes of the old galleries. The conversation helped me clarify my own discontent. It seems today's commercial Fine

Art Galleries have half their mind set in 'commercial' mode with the other half in 'gallery' approach. As a result neither is being properly attended to. The one fact they seem to ignore is that they are in the business of selling art to the public. They are specialty stores; Fine Art Shops!

Consider how, when entering any specialty store, be it furniture, jewelry, or up-market frock shop, you are acknowledged by a salesperson, who lets you know they are available to assist or happy to leave you to browse. Noting the presence of one customer, even when busy with another, makes a difference to sales numbers. It's called courtesy and it makes good business sense.

So why do staff of commercial art galleries (Original Art Stores?) ignore people who come into their space? Do they see members of the general public as only lookers rather than customers, or are they just plain rude? All I can say is their attitude must be very bad for business. Wouldn't it make better sense if every visitor to a commercial gallery (Art Emporium?) was treated as a potential client?

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