

Sumter County Gallery of Art in Sumter, SC, Features Works by Jim Arendt and Elizabeth Brim

The Sumter County Gallery of Art in Sumter, SC, is presenting two solo exhibits including: *Jim Arendt: Selvage* and *Elizabeth Brim: Sewing with Steel*, on view through July 5, 2013.

The Sumter County Gallery of Art is proud to present the fiber-based installation works of Jim Arendt. Arendt received his BFA from Kendall College of Art & Design and his MFA with a concentration in painting from the University of South Carolina. He currently serves as Director of the Rebecca Randall Bryan Gallery at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, SC.

As an artist Arendt's work explores the shifting paradigms of labor and place through narrative figure painting, drawing, prints, fabric and sculpture. The body of work to be shown in *Selvage*, defined as the edge of woven fabric finished so as to prevent raveling, is influenced by the radical reshaping of the rural and industrial landscapes he grew up in. These life-sized figurative works of family and friends are made by meticulously layering strips of blue denim of different shades. The expressions captured in the faces and the details of the garments, are truly amazing. Through the use of denim, a traditionally working class fabric, Arendt investigates how individual lives are affected by changing economic structures.



Work by Jim Arendt

Arendt's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally in numerous group and solo exhibitions. Recently, his work was awarded Best in Show at Hub-Bub Gallery's *Emerging Carolina*, in Spartanburg, SC, and was included in the *South Carolina Biennial* and the *701 CCA Prize 2012* at 701 Center for Contemporary Art in Columbia, SC. His work will also be included in *Fiberarts International 2013* in Pittsburgh, PA, and the *2013 Textile Biennial* in the Netherlands.

Frank McCauley, SCGA curator stated, "If you followed the ambitious visual art festival - "Artfields" in Lake City, SC, that ended two weeks ago, Arendt's piece *Jamie* won the \$50,000 grand prize. It was selected out of 400 artists from 9 Southeastern states. We had scheduled Arendt to show at the gallery a year ago."

Arendt offered the following artist statement: "Art is labor made visible. The order, planning and execution of art making serves as a metaphor for the labor undertaken on my family's farm. The land bound us to it and to one another. Labor became a tangible expression of our hopes. Art making is a way for me to echo the cycles of seasonal death, unemployment, natural disasters, and loss I've encountered. The physical labor involved in the creation of these pieces mirrors the work I engaged in with my family. The scale and application of materials evokes in me memories of the time when there was promise for our endeavor. My material choice seeks to create a greater relevancy between content and form. Denim was created to be abused, worn out,



Work by Elizabeth Brim

patched, stained and burnt through with hot sparks. Its characteristics are mirrored in the individuals I choose to represent."

The Sumter County Gallery of Art is also proud to present the sculptural work of Elizabeth Brim. Brim was raised in Columbus, GA, and received her MFA in printmaking from the University of Georgia in 1979. She attended the Penland School of Crafts, studying ceramics, woodworking, metals, and finally blacksmithing. She became an instructor and iron studio coordinator at Penland in 1995 and now lives in Penland, NC, where she works as a full time studio artist.

Brim has taught blacksmithing at Penland, Haystack School in Deere Island, ME, and Peters Valley Craft Center in Layton, NJ, and has been a visiting artist at several institutions, including the Cranbrook Academy of Art. Her work has been included in several important invitational exhibitions and is represented in the Horn Collection in Little Rock, AR, as well as the Mint Museum Art Collection in Charlotte, NC.

Karen Watson, director at SCGA notes that, "Brim's work was first shown at the Sumter County Gallery of Art as part of the large-scale *Tradition/Innovation* exhibition in 2009 that featured traditional arts and contemporary craft. We knew then that we wanted to show more of Elizabeth's work."

In a recent conversation with Watson, Brim talked about a technique of "inflating" metal she developed because she wanted to make a pillow. She heats two welded pieces of steel in a gas forge and then forces compressed air between the plates to inflate them, imparting a light, delicate quality to the work. She has been asked to teach many workshops on this technique, from St. Louis to Canada.

Much of Brim's work mimics soft fabric, feminine objects, as well as forms found in nature and are made using a combination of both contemporary and ancient blacksmithing techniques.

About her work Brim states: "Tenacity and experimentation led me through a male-dominated world of iron to a career creating work that references feminine attire and domesticity. Inspired by my upbringing in Columbus, GA, my work is strongly influenced by my mother and grandmother. They were meticulous craftswomen working at home, sewing frilly dresses for us, enjoying every minute, and taking pride in their accomplishments. I take pleasure in breaking the preconceived idea that blacksmithing is an occupation for a brawny man. In my own way I am following the tradition of the ladies of my family. I use a hammer, anvil, torch and welders to make sculptures that reference cloth, suggest narratives, and celebrate Southern women of my generation."

Bringing exhibitions of this caliber to the Sumter County Gallery of Art would not be possible without the support of the Sumter community. Special thanks to Stifel Financial, Sumter Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery, Turner Garage & Transmission, Zaxby's, Mallie Jenkins and the Poinsett Garden Club for making this show possible.

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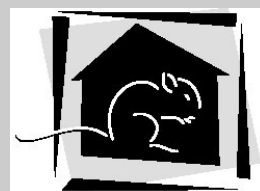
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