

Bearing Witness: Art of Alabama

Panel Discussion: *Public Art in Alabama*

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts
Saturday, November 16
9:00am

Facilitated by Elliot Knight, Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts



Underwood & Underwood, Publishers,
New York, London, Toronto, Canada, Christchurch, New Zealand



Works and Luncheon Hall
Washington, D.C.

Colossal iron statue of Volcan, 25 ft. high, weight 250,000 lbs. in Miner Bldg.,
Ward's Bldg., 1st. Floor, U. S. A. Copyright 1904 by Underwood & Underwood.



BOSTON TEA PARTY, 1773
PAINTED BY J. M. W. TURNER, 1832



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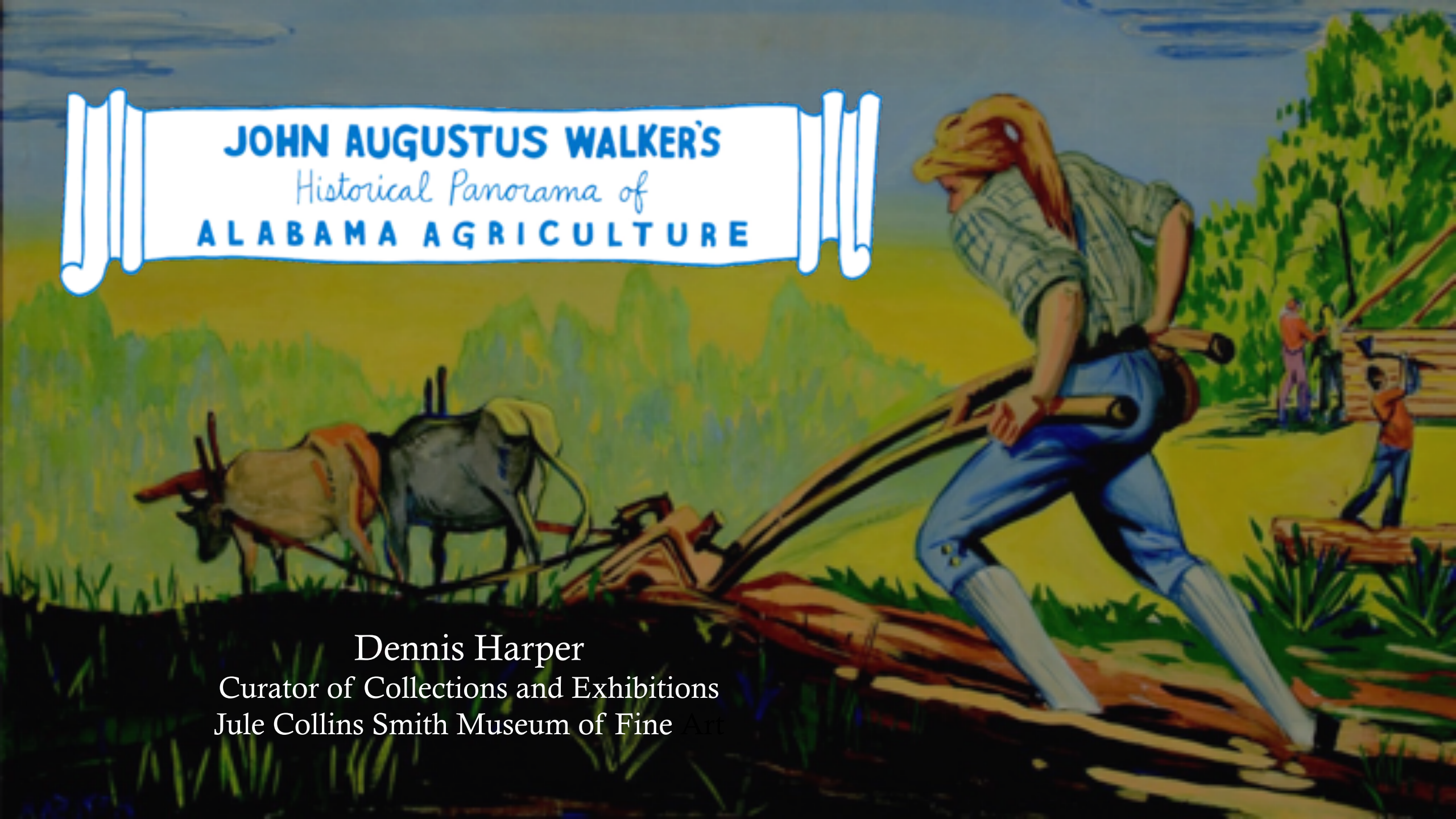


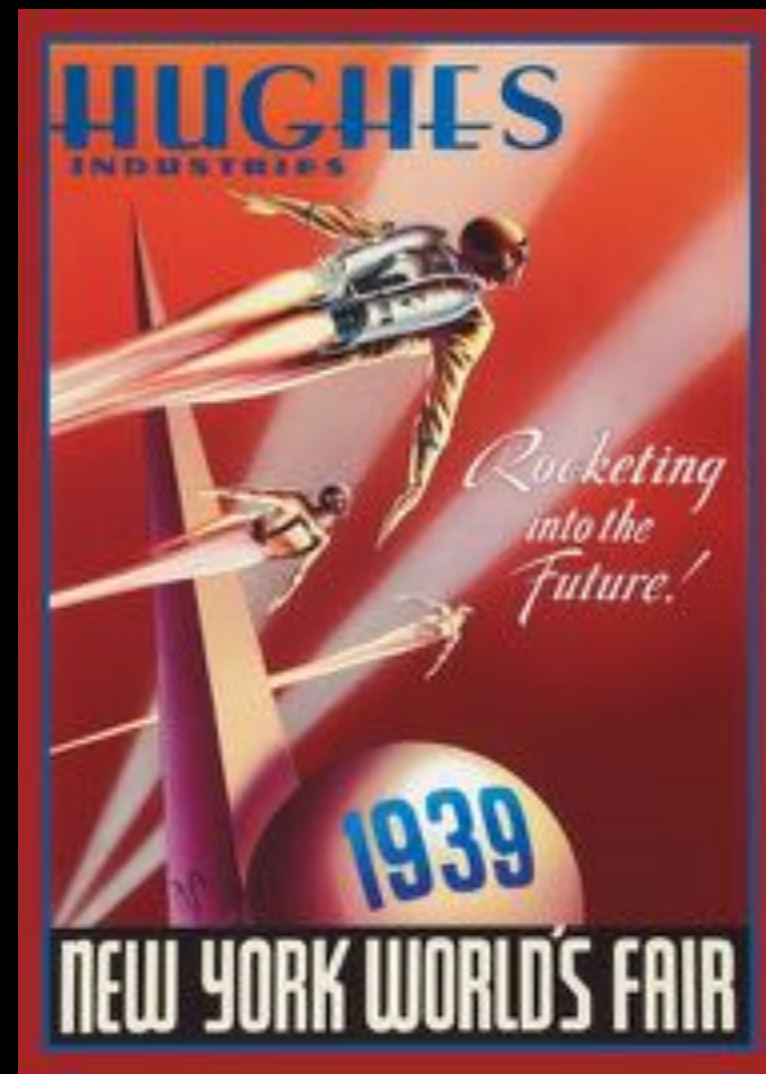
Dennis Harper,
Curator of Collections and Exhibitions

Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art
at Auburn University

JOHN AUGUSTUS WALKER'S
Historical Panorama of
ALABAMA AGRICULTURE

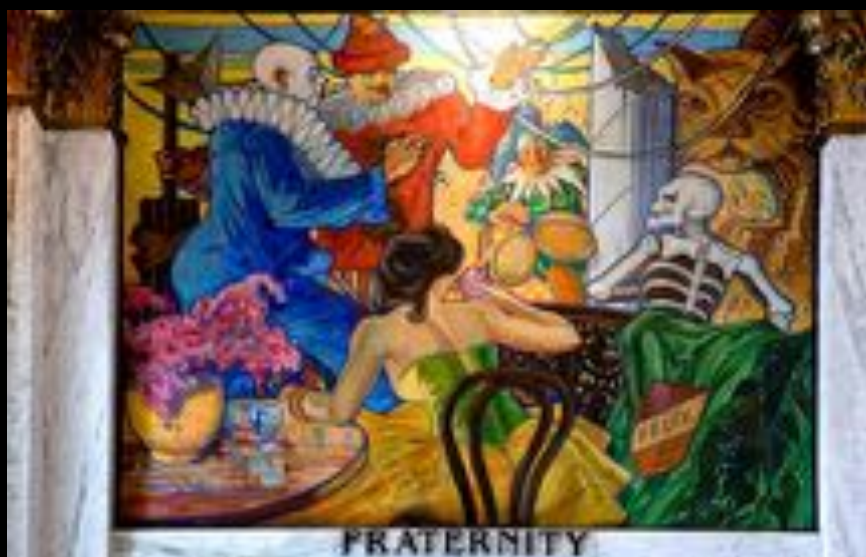
Dennis Harper
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Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art











ALABAMA'S FIRST FARMER



CAME EXPLORERS *Bringing* MEAT SUPPLY



UNTO^{the} LAND CAME A NEW CIVILIZATION



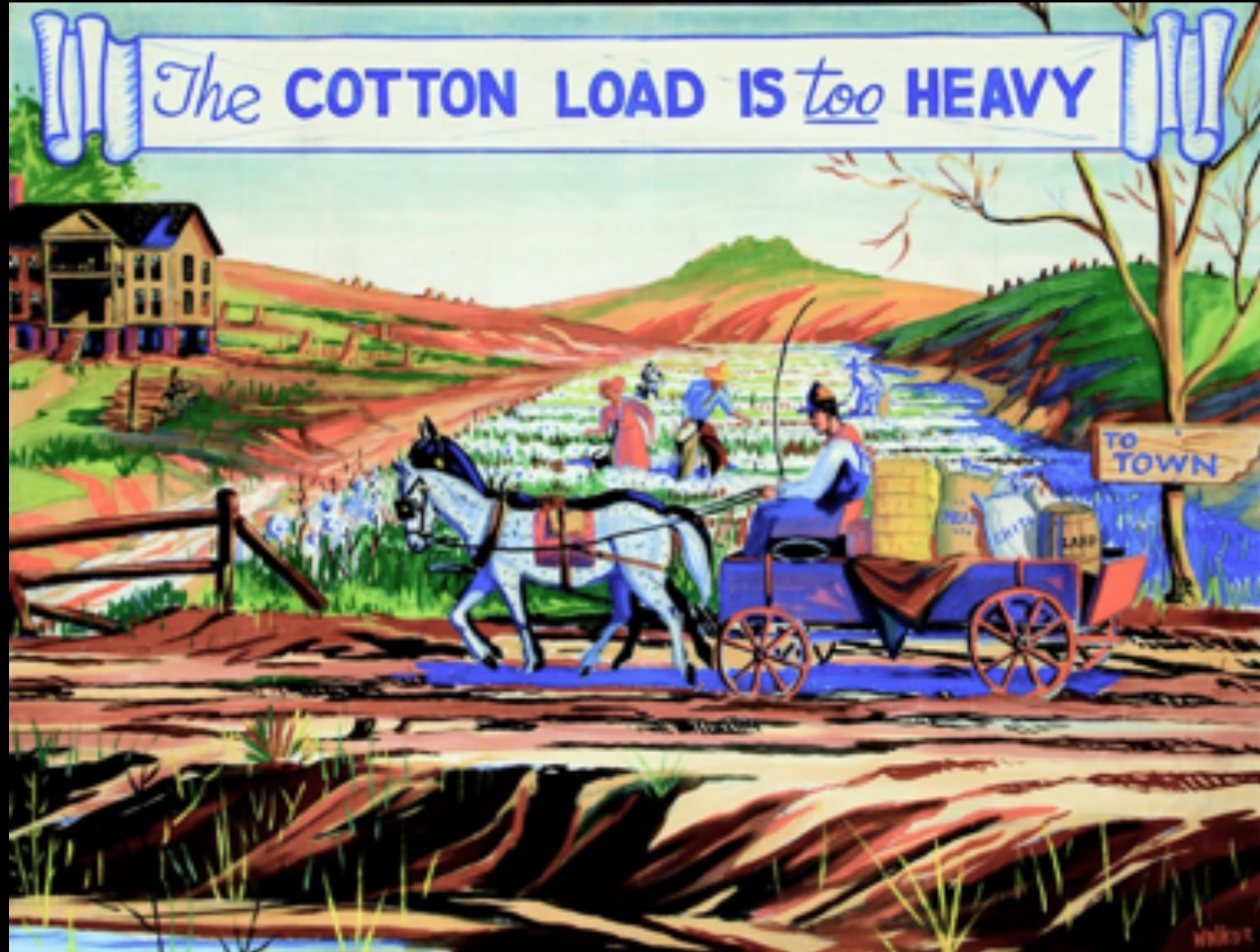
HOME *and* FAMILY LIFE BEGINS.



TOOLS *and* LABOR SAVE *the* HARVEST



The **COTTON** **LOAD** IS *too* **HEAVY**



THE FARM SUPPORTS *Itself*.



FARM PROGRESS IS GREAT





SCIENCE ON THE
FARM IS BRING-
ING *an* IMPROVED
ALABAMA AGRI-
CULTURE, WITH
TIMBER, BETTER
LIVESTOCK *more*
FOOD *and* FEED.



Chintia Kirana

Multidisciplinary Artist,
Expose Art & Montgomery Art Project







Photo by Mickey Welsh



Photo by Mickey Welsh



Photo by Mickey Welsh







Photo by Emily Thomas











Photo by Mickey Welsh for the Montgomery Advertiser

Deborah Velders

Executive Director, Mobile Museum of Art



PUBLIC ART (in Alabama):

Content . Character . Community

Deborah Velders

November 2019

First -- 3 questions:

1. WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?

2. WHAT IS ITS FUNCTION or PURPOSE?

3. WHO IS IT FOR?

From “Americans for the Arts” website; *Public Art 101*: Art in public spaces plays a distinguishing role in our country’s history and culture, **It reflects and reveals our society, enhances meaning in our civic spaces, and adds uniqueness to our communities. Public art humanizes the built environment** (it) matters because our communities gain cultural, social, and economic value through public art.”

From *Forbes Magazine*: “Public art can provide a new way to experience the city . . . It is ‘government sponsored or funded artwork created by or with professional artists and legally sited in publicly accessible venues.’ . . . But we don’t just need (public art) for the money—we **need public art because it improves our quality of life, because it makes us stop and open our eyes....**to something that ignites conversation, to something sublime.”

From the Association for Public Art Forum: *Public art can express community values, enhance our environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions. Placed in public sites, this art is there for everyone, a form of collective community expression. Public art is a reflection of how we see the world – the artist’s response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are.*

PURPOSE & FUNCTION OF PUBLIC ART IN THE DISTANT PAST: POWER & PRESTIGE

Public art has served as a vehicle or expression of political, religious and economic power and prestige for millennia: In 450 B.C., the Athenian general Pericles deployed public money, (dues paid to Athens by its allies) to support the city-state's artists and thinkers, in an effort to win political support (through job creation, and awe-inspiring scale and magnitude of the new art and architecture).

This has motivated subsequent municipalities, states, countries, Church, and businesses ever since . . .



PURPOSE & FUNCTION OF PUBLIC ART IN THE PRESENT: POWER & PRESTIGE--AWE?



Metalmorphosis by David Cerny
(Charlotte, NC)



16th Avenue Steps by
Aileen Barr and Colette
Crutcher (San Francisco)



Anish Kapoor,
Cloud Gate (Chicago)

Concurrent with the official, governmental or corporate commissions of “Public Art” for more official purposes—artists continued to create “public” or outdoor art privately as personal, and even visionary expressions

THESE PRIVATE CREATIONS WERE OFTEN SUBSEQUENTLY INTRODUCED INTO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN (through populist interest, professional recognition and public demand) A few examples:

Nek Chand’s Rock Garden of Chandigarh, India (1957-1976)

Pearl Fryar’s Topiary Creations of Bishopville, S.C.. (1988-2006)

Veijo Rönkkönen’s Garden of 500 concrete figures, Parikkala, Finland (1960’s – 2010)

John Milkovich “Beer Can House” (Houston, TX) (1968-1988)

Gee’s Bend Quilters

James Hampton’s “Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nation’s Millennium”

Graffiti art, Architectural wonders & follie, backyard environments . . .



And in Alabama . . .



Tinglewood Carvings, Orr Park
(Montevallo, AL),



Butch Anthony's Museum of Wonder
and The Drive-Thru Museum
(Seale, AL),



Gee's Bend Quilters, photo by
Tom Pich



Joe Minter's African Village
In America (Birmingham, AL)

WHAT DISTINGUISHES PUBLIC ART IN ALABAMA?

The qualities that define and distinguish Alabama itself . . . Lacking the economic, corporate and political power of other states and nations—Alabama artists have simply utilized what they have, taking existing resources (recycling the man-made, using the natural environment) for their creative expression.

In a 2005 ASCA Publication dedicated to Alabama's Public Art, former Executive Director Al Head, wrote:

"...in all cases, public art calls attention to something people feel is important.. . . Alabama has an abundance of public art that reflects the unique and colorful character of the place we call home."

(Selected) PUBLIC ART

of

ALABAMA'S GULF COAST
(Mobile, Eastern shore)

A COMMISSION by the STATE OF ALABAMA (for Mobile, AL):

Caspar Buberl (b. Bohemia, American, 1834 –1899) Portrait of Admiral Raphael Semmes, 1899 bronze [dedicated in 1900]



"The statue is eight feet six inches high. The pedestal is twelve feet high, which will be cut in granite in Louisville, Ky., after my design. On this is a bronze panel with the ship 'Alabama' and an inscriptive plate with the words: 'Raphael Semmes, Commander C. S. Steamer Alabama, Rear Admiral C. S. Navy, Sailor, Patriot, Statesman, Scholar and Christian Gentleman.'"

Caspar Buberl

COMMISSION BY THE CITY OF MOBILE (for its Civic Center, 1964):

CONRAD ALBRIZIO (1894-1973) MOSAIC MURALS IN MOBILE: Mobile's strong identification with Mardi Gras was expressed in Albrizio's two massive mosaic murals, 1964-65, created for and located in Mobile's Civic Center building (opened 1964):



COMMISSION BY UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA, Medical Center, 1966

CONRAD ALBRIZIO (1894-1973) MOSAIC MURALS IN MOBILE: An additional Albrizio mosaic is located in the University of South Alabama's College of Medicine, created on the theme of the "History of Medicine" for the school in 1965.. Albrizio Completed several prior public artworks: a small mosaic of mother/child in a YWCA building In 1958; a mosaic of the history of law and justice for Mobile County Courthouse in 1958; A cycle of frescoes on **maritime trade and commerce** in 1949 (relocated in the lobby of Mobile's Waterman-Smith Building on St. Joseph St.). **All Albrizio's works reflected his commitment to depicting uplifting views of human achievement, and express the idea of the artist as "socially conscious leader"—a strongly held belief held by the artist.**



COMMISSION BY UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA; CHILDREN'S & WOMEN'S HOSPITAL . . . Geri Moulton's Children's Park (2010)



COMMISSION BY UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA



University of South Alabama Moulton Bell Tower Mural,
Jason Guynes, 2013

**2017-18 FEDERAL GSA COMMISSION FOR NEW FEDERAL COURTHOUSE
(Hartman-Cox Architects), MOBILE, AL (Art in Architecture Program)**

Art advisors charge to artists: to explore and interpret something of the community and region (Delta, the city's 300+ year history, Mardi Gras, etc.)



Jason Middlebrook, (American, b. 1966)
“Growing in Mobile” mosaic (GSA commission, 2018)
for
the new **US Federal Courthouse**, Mobile, Alabama



2017-18 FEDERAL GSA COMMISSION FOR
NEW FEDERAL COURTHOUSE, MOBILE, AL (Art in Architecture Program)

Raine Bedsole, (American, b. 1960)
“Justitia” steel sculpture (GSA commission, 2018) for
the new **US Federal Courthouse**, Mobile, Alabama



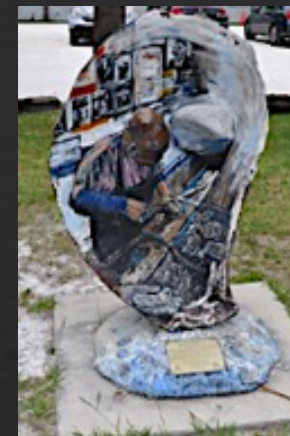
**MUNICIPAL, PRIVATE ENTITY COMMISSIONS OF ARTWORK BY AREA
ARTISTS -- FOR THE CITY OF MOBILE:**



Bike Rack, 2008,
Corey Swindle



Moblobz, 2013, Kenny Scharf, Al.
Contemp. Art Cntr



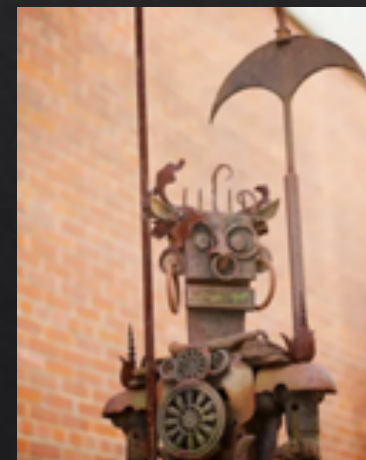
Oyster 11, Wintzell's,
2013, Devlin Wilson



Equino, 2017,
Casey Downing



Lucy Gafford, Flowers (at Recycling cntr)
mural



Bruce Larsen,
Sentry, 2012

PUBLIC ART INITIATIVES BY THE MOBILE MUSEUM OF ART -- FOR THE CITY OF MOBILE:



Government Plaza Gallery (Showcase For area artists)



Sculpture Trail



A Pop Up Museum for Mobile,
Satellite space in downtown Mobile



**MUNICIPAL, PRIVATE ENTITY COMMISSIONS OF ARTWORK BY REGIONAL,
LOCAL ARTISTS IN THE CITY OF FAIRHOPE (a small selection):**



Marietta Johnson sculpture,
Fairhope Park by Fran Neumann,
Barbara Casey and
Richard Arnold Dedicated 1997



Seahorse by Bruce Larsen
and John Rezner



Deedee Morrison, A Matter of
Fiction, corten steel and lucite



ABORIGINAL SEA LIFE by Ameri'ca Jones Gallaspy is
a mural funded by FEFF (Fairhope Educational Enrichment
Fund) in 2002.

CONTENT

CHARACTER

COMMUNITY