

Aiken Center for the Arts

continued from Page 25

Augusta University. Thorp received his MFA in drawing and painting from the Mount Royal Graduate School at the Maryland Institute College of Art. He is an artist, writer and educator specializing in creativity. Currently he is also a contributing writer and consulting editor for *ArtPulse Magazine*, an international magazine covering the state of contemporary art.

The Guild's Show will feature awards in the categories of 2-D, 3-D, and photography as well as the Phil Premar Best of Show, the William Colgate Best Aiken Scene, the Van Zile People's Choice, and the Ed Warner New Member awards. Over \$1,400.00 in awards will be given at the reception.

The Aiken Artist Guild has evolved over the last 49 years still keeping in mind its objectives to create an opportunity for local artists to participate in well-regulated exhibits that will expose to the citizens of Aiken County the wealth of artistic talent therein, to stimulate an appreciation of original visual arts in the area, and to develop educational and other benefits for the members.

The *Annual Member Show* is highly anticipated by the membership and the public. It is the culmination of the membership year which includes exhibits at local businesses, workshops, monthly program speakers, and involvement in many of the city's activities. AAG members are honored with awards from area shows including shows at McCormick, Anderson, North Augusta, the South Carolina Watermedia Society, and



Work by Lindy Candell from the 2016 exhibit

outside the state.

The Guild is a 501-c-3 organization that will celebrate its 50th anniversary beginning in September of 2017. Several exciting events are already in the works! It is a remarkable accomplishment to have an all-volunteer organization evolve and grow for 50 years.

For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, to learn about the Guild and membership, visit (www.aikenartistguild.org). Join and like us on Facebook to keep up with all the Guild's activities!

Sumter County Gallery of Art in Sumter, SC, Features Works by William Paul Thomas and Saba Taj

The Sumter County Gallery of Art in Sumter, SC, is presenting timely exhibitions of the work of two young artists, William Paul Thomas *Loved Ones* and Saba Taj *Muslims Are Awesome* on view through June 23, 2017.

These are unusual times to be an artist and the recent presidential election has left many people feeling vulnerable and unwelcome in their own country. Both Thomas and Taj belong to communities that are experiencing a heightened sense of anxiety as their status as Americans is questioned. Karen Watson, Director of the Sumter County Gallery of Art observes, "it is more important than ever to provide an opportunity for the voices and visions of these artists to be seen and heard. The Sumter County Gallery of Art is committed to presenting challenging art that, we hope, will increase understanding and break down barriers."

The gallery is also excited to present an online catalog of this exhibition. We are honored that Jonell Logan, an independent curator, arts advocate, and founder of 300 Arts Project, LLC, will be the essayist for the catalog. In 2016, Logan served as the adviser and catalog essayist for the Columbia Museum of Art's stellar exhibition, *REMIX: Themes and Variations in African-American Art*.

William Paul Thomas paints portraits of people in his social circle and sometimes includes text directly over their likenesses. That text is often tinged with dry humor and is derived from the spoken vernacular of the communities Thomas was reared in. His goal is to share with diverse audiences what he sees as worthwhile subject matter that increases understanding of a community, include religious symbolism or popular slang. Painting pictures is his way of capsulizing this broad, ongoing exploration of the human condition.

Watson states that *Loved Ones* is an appropriate title for Thomas's exhibition, because the titles of the portraits reflect familial connections – a little girl's dad, an auntie's grandson, a friend's fiancé. Thomas chooses specific people as models as a way of recognizing their significance in his life and honoring everyday people who often move through this world unnoticed. We regularly celebrate women and men of prominence in mass media – celebri-



Work by William Paul Thomas

ties, politicians, but Thomas highlights the people that impact him in a more personal and direct way. The work begins as an intimate acknowledgement of an individual and is subsequently transformed into a larger statement of universality. Thomas's work reiterates the notion that we are more alike that we are different.

Thomas's current series, "Cyanosis" which will be part of the Sumter Gallery exhibition, explores being deprived of basic human rights, being marginalized, or victimized by painting parts of the subjects' faces blue. Cyanosis is a way to describe the bluish tone of the skin that results from the lack of oxygen in the blood. The most recent witnessing of deprivation of oxygen was the strangulation death of Eric Garner by NYPD police officers. Although the blue represents something somber, some people see different things. One viewer was reminded of the haint blue painted on the porches and ceilings of some Southern homes to keep evil spirits from entering. The human face, whether in a painting or photograph, has a powerful effect on the viewer.

Thomas offered the following artist statement, "Many people have an immediate psychological connection and/or identification to faces. As people are drawn to look closer at the portraits, questions about the subject's state of mind arise. Are they sad, reflective, angry? If the expression is ambiguous enough, we might begin to project our own emotions onto them to interpret the painting's meaning. We regularly celebrate women and men of prominence in mass media, so I take advantage of the opportunity to highlight the working people in my community that impact me more

continued on Page 27

Exquisite handblown glass gallery and studio in the historic downtown vista arts district. Open to the public Mon. thru Sat. Offering unique and affordable blown glass vases, bowls, flowers, indoor and outdoor lighting, zipper perfume bottles, ringholders, sculpture, ornaments and much, much more. Providing quality, uniqueness, and affordability for 20 years!

Ask about our classes!!



*One Eared Cow Glass, Inc.
1001 Huger St. Columbia, SC
803-254-2444 www.oneearedcow.com*

CITYART

Capturing the Light Landscape Workshop
in Oils or Acrylics with [Michael Story](#)



May 23rd, 24th, and 25th, 2017

10:00 am - 4:00 pm with break for lunch

Master your landscape painting and join Michael for this 3-day workshop as we use under painting and layering of color to simulate radiant light in our landscape paintings.

Visit cityartonline.com/art-classes to view more information and to sign up!

1224 Lincoln Street - Columbia, SC 29201 - 803.252.3613 - cityartonline.com