

West Main - Katee Hargraves

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deepest depths of the emotions that reside within all of us.”

Born in Texas, Hargraves, 39, has traveled the world extensively and lived on the west coast, in the midwest, and now in the South. Her passion for creating art was first inspired by her father and by nature. “My father’s paintings were always something I loved to admire. By listening to his stories about his inspirations and dreams expressed through his art was the spark turned into a flame that developed over time into a raging fire of passion. A need to express myself and explore the universe of our minds artistically, was born. My darling mother has always been the beautiful quiet rainstorm that nurtured that passion and encouraged the strength within me. I have developed a deep appreciation for creating artistic tokens of self-exploration and expression. And I journeyed to find ways of capturing the

little pieces of the magic and mystery of life through my photography and art. I also love to write, play outdoors, travel and occasionally dabble in pyrography.”

West Main Artists Co-op is a non-profit membership-based agency that is housed in a former church on west Main Street in Spartanburg. It has more than 50 visual and performing artists, many of whom have working and/or gallery studios in the 20,000-square-foot building. Soon to be 10 years old, WMAC hosts on the average three exhibits each month, two by members; one by a guest artist. It also has workshops, a printery, a ceramics studio, three galleries, and a two-room gift shop that is stocked with the largest collection of locally made art in the City and County of Spartanburg.

For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings or visit (www.WestMainArtists.org).

West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, Features Works by J. Michael Johnson

West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, will present ‘*Nam Era: Never Forgotten*’, featuring works by Upstate photographer, J. Michael Johnson, showing images from the Vietnam war’s aftermath, on view from May 8 - 31, 2019. A reception will be held on May 16, from 5-9pm, during the city’s monthly ArtWalk.

In what is sure to be an emotionally impactful art exhibit, Upstate South Carolina resident and photographer J. Michael Johnson will showcase 40 photographs about the Vietnam War.

“This is an exhibit that I look forward to with trepidation,” Co-op Chair Beth Regula said. “I really want to see these images about the Vietnam War, yet I know it will be difficult for me and probably others, too. But the war is part of our American history and something we must never forget. By seeing these pictures, it is my hope that people will find healing and peace. The photographer is doing us a great service by presenting this exhibit, helping us understand what happened and what has happened in the aftermath that took so many lives.”

“These 41 digital images capture a celebration of the veterans of the Vietnam conflict, honoring both their fallen and living comrades-in-arms,” Johnson said. “I’ve been told by visitors that veterans and veterans’ family members have come back to visit this exhibit several times just to put the ‘Nam Era behind them.” This exhibit has been seen at other regional galleries.

All of the photography in this exhibit depicts different aspects of the Vietnam War, such as a biker weeping at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, and a soldier standing guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It took the artist about six months to select and prepare the haunting and telling images for this exhibit. All of the pictures were taken between 2002 and 2013. The framed images will be for sale, ranging from \$300 to \$800.



Work by J. Michael Johnson

As a professional photographer, Johnson captures images of many different moments in life, such as weddings, street life, nature, motorcycles, and a freewheeling lifestyle. However, his photography about the Vietnam War stands out as some of his most meaningful. He was inspired to create this exhibit because he was in the military during the Vietnam Era but was never sent into battle. However, he had service friends who were sent to “‘Nam, Laos and Cambodia. Even today I still do not know what



Work by J. Michael Johnson

happened to those men and women I met in service,” he said.

He further explained: “Memorial Day weekend, May 1992, I did a trip to The Wall in Washington, DC, where I tried to read two letters left under a name engraved on The Wall. Because of the large amount of people visiting that day, I could not read those letters. So I did what I do best: I photographed them to read later in my studio. After reading the letters, I never thought a whole lot more about them again until Memorial Day weekend 1997, five years to the day, within minutes of the same time in 1992, I photographed these same letters again. The hairs on the back of my neck stood straight up. My mind produced crazy, mind-boggling thoughts of the ‘Nam Era.

“Unknowingly, I started photographing this collection during that Memorial Day weekend 1997, while photographing Rolling Thunder members riding their Harley-Davidson motorcycles in their Freedom Ride from the Pentagon to The Wall,” he said.

Johnson was born and reared in East Tennessee and has lived in the Southeast for his entire life. He began taking images and working in his darkroom more than 35 years ago. His love of photographing the motorcycle lifestyle and other subjects, and his self-taught methods truly define his subjects. His experiences have produced a collection of work that documents bikers and biker ladies riding on Daytona’s Main Street, along with the serious side of these riders as they remember the Vietnam Era, showing them remembering a fallen comrade, a brother, a sister or a father whose name is now engraved forever in the black granite. Many of Johnson’s fine art prints are in private collections.

Since 1997, Johnson’s photography and writing about Daytona’s Bike Week, as

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well as many other motorcycle rallies and events, have been featured in *Easyriders*, *Biker*, and *In The Wind* magazines. Also, he has provided commercial photography services to various companies in the motorcycle industry. His renown in motorcycle lifestyle photography has resulted in his giving slide shows to numerous motorcycle clubs, churches, and civic groups. His most requested images are of the Vietnam veterans visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial during “Rolling Thunder” events.

In his artist’s statement, Johnson says: “My ‘*Nam Era: Never Forgotten*’ project is a Vietnam veterans’ photographic tribute I started in 1997 at The Wall, showing us freedom is not free and should never be taken for granted. My early Sunday morning walks into the depth and quietness of The Wall let me digitally capture Vietnam veterans visiting names — names that represent the real human cost of freedom, showing us the names of young American boys and girls who grew up way too fast, fighting a war on foreign soils to sacrifice their own lives fighting for American freedom in foreign lands that some say God forgot: Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. These digital images show friends and family members

touching loved ones’ names on The Wall, while getting a rubbing of a name so they can remember, honor and keep their loved one’s memory alive and remind us that we still have POW-MIAs in Vietnam.

“There are unforgettable images that are still in my mind because I had to make a decision when to let an award-winning photo go because a Vietnam veteran’s personal privacy was much more important than a picture. Visitors are welcome to touch these prints and read the patches on these veterans’ vests and hats that express bikers’, civilians’ and veterans’ personal feelings in each print. I encourage everyone to take as much time needed to view and understand the meanings of each print in this exhibit. “And remember to thank a veteran for your freedom.”

West Main Artists Co-op is one of Spartanburg’s leading nonprofit arts agency. It is a membership-based venue with more than 50 members, about 30 artists’ studios, three galleries, a printery, a ceramics studio, and the largest collection of for-sale and locally made art in the county.

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Bechtler Museum of Modern Art in Charlotte, NC, Offers Exhibition Focused on Modern Tapestries

The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art in Charlotte, NC, is presenting *Nomadic Murals: Tapestries of the Modern Era*, an exploration and presentation of more than 40 tapestries created by artists usually associated with painting, sculpture, and architecture, including Alexander Calder, Le Corbusier, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso among many others, on view in the Fourth-Floor Gallery, through Dec. 1, 2019.

Nomadic Murals will highlight the museum’s collection of tapestries from the mid-20th century, as well as shed light on a unique medium that has been important to many great Modern and contemporary art-

ists. This will be the first time that the museum’s entire tapestries collection will be on view. The tapestries will be hung alongside the artists’ work in more familiar media to demonstrate both the stylistic consistency and the unique contributions textile production brought to their oeuvre. The title of the exhibition stems from Le Corbusier’s essay “Tapestries: Nomadic Murals.”

Tapestries, a centuries-old tradition, found renewed attention and invention over the last century, in particular by artists from the 20th century who tackled a venerated practice with avant-garde zeal. Some artists

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