

PERSPECTIVES

Quarterly stories for A&H members & donors

Spring 2022 Newsletter Volume 2 | Issue 1

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Dear Friend of the A&H,

2022 is shaping up to be an exciting time for the A&H! We have so much to share...

Art Party - We're planning a new, fun and informal concept for our upcoming gala, A&H: The Art Party on March 26. It will be primarily outside, and highly interactive with artists. VIP tickets/tables are limited, but there's a more affordable general ticket option this year that we're sure you'll love. (Details and tickets at artandhistory.org/artparty)



Exhibitions - We've had a great response to our upcoming Art Center exhibition. Our Chief Curator Dan L. Hess and our Exhibitions Manager Katie Benson have done a wonderful job showcasing Mrs. Hair Truesdell's story. Our new History Museum exhibition ties into the Art Center exhibition. The Art Center galleries and History Museum will be open on Wednesdays again, beginning February 9! Plus, the Waterhouse Residence Museum is back open.

Collaborative Campaign - February 1 is the kick-off for our yearly United Arts Collaborative Campaign for the Arts, where we join with 30 other arts & culture organizations in Central Florida to raise vital funds for our missions! We hope you will support us (again) this year. And consider sharing this on your social media. If you're an A&H member but not a donor to the Campaign, please consider this additional support. And if you're a donor but not currently a member, come enjoy the perks of membership! If you enjoy what A&H offers, why not make a gift to help make this accessible to others in our community. You can visit unitedarts.cc/artandhistory to make an online gift, pick up a pledge form on campus, or watch for a pledge form in your mail in a few weeks.

I just returned from our state Capitol this week (January 26) to participate in Art Advocacy Day with colleagues representing many of the arts & culture organizations in Florida. A&H receives funding from a wide variety of sources including the state of Florida to sustain our National Historic Landmark, museums, and programs you love. If you speak with our state Representatives, be sure to tell them that you support state funding for the arts! (Pictured here with State House Rep. Kamia Brown, representing northwest Orlando.)



I'm excited about the possibilities for 2022, and I hope you are too. I look forward to seeing you soon. As always, please reach out if I can be of service!

Sincerely,
Jessi VanPelt
Director of Advancement (and art & history super fan!)
407-539-2181 x 260 / jvanpelt@artandhistory.org



Contributors to this issue of Perspectives: Katie Benson, Becky Bruni, Dan L. Hess, and Jessi VanPelt.

On the cover: *Untitled* by J. André Smith, ca. 1940. From the new *Florida Byways* exhibition in Maitland History Museum

A&H CAMPUS HOURS

Maitland Art Center
Maitland History Museum
Wednesday-Sunday 11am-4pm
(Thur-Sun until February 9)

Waterhouse Residence Museum
Saturday & Sunday 11am-4pm

Grounds: Chapel / Main Garden
Tuesday-Sunday 11am-4pm

Current Exhibitions



The Recollections of Doretha Hair Truesdell: Alfred Hair and The Florida Highwaymen

February 5 - May 8 | Maitland Art Center

Q. If you had the chance to give them a title—you know, as someone who lived through those times, with those lives—how would you describe the people that are now known as The Highwaymen?

A. That's a tough one, but what I want to say is, like, "Endurers." Not survivors, but a term of perseverance, you know. They endured what they had to do and made their way, even though they had all these obstacles in their way, and they didn't let any of that define who they were at all. They were "Endurers."

The above Q and A is just one small section of the wonderful interview our curatorial team conducted with Doretha Hair Truesdell.

In the planning of the Highwaymen exhibition we had a singular goal, to find someone there at the group's genesis who would want to tell their story. We discovered that Doretha Hair Truesdell, widow of Alfred Hair – the individual universally accepted as the founder of the group – was still very much alive. We reached out to her to see if she would be comfortable sharing her intimate memories for the purpose of an exhibition.

We welcomed Doretha and her husband John Truesdell to the Art Center on Friday, December 10, 2021. After a tour of the grounds, we made our way to the residence of our founder J. André Smith. There, over the next several hours, we conducted and filmed her interview. The result was more than we could have hoped for. Doretha's razor-sharp memory sweeps us back to the beginning: her move to Florida and first meeting with Alfred, the gestation of the movement inside their home, the community of artists and salespeople who worked in tandem, and, ultimately, the aftermath of Alfred's death.

Doretha's recollections are the thread that ties this intimate exhibition together. Her quotes are accompanied by wonderful examples of the group's paintings. This includes beautiful examples of the work of Alfred Hair, as well as works of 14 members of the other Highwaymen artists, on loan from the Orange County Regional History Center. Hair is known as the "father" of the Highwaymen. His passionate and hard-working nature inspired a group of black Florida artists to push artistic and racial boundaries. After taking painting lessons from the renowned Ft. Pierce artist, A. E. "Beanie" Backus, Hair developed his own painterly style and became inspired to share his talent. Encouraging his fellow graduates from Lincoln Park Academy and beyond to learn to paint, Hair and the young artists embarked on a unique new business plan.

This plan, consisting of painting the familiar Florida landscapes of the artist's hometowns and selling the works along the highways of the Florida coast, created a rich and vibrant livelihood for those involved. Hair famously developed a technique called "fast painting" where he created an assembly line of canvases which he painted rapidly, sometimes creating as many as twenty paintings a day. Other members of the Highwaymen family, including Hair's wife Doretha and other up and coming artists, helped with preparing the Upson board canvases and painting backgrounds, and learned to paint along the way.

Alfred Hair's death saw the vibrant, golden years of the 1960s Highwaymen come to an end. Many of the Highwaymen ceased painting or moved away, but the memory of Hair and his enduring nature continues to inspire those who knew him and those who strive to follow in his artistic footsteps.



Doretha Hair Truesdell & John Truesdell

Current Exhibitions



January 21 - August 14 | Maitland History Museum

When artist Jules André Smith began to winter in Florida in the early 1930s, he was introduced to a Florida long forgotten. This Florida, outlined by beaches and speckled with orange groves, was entwined with the oak tree-lined byways that provided him with inspiration around every bend. The search for this inspiration led Smith and his friend Duke Banca to go on long drives through these roads, uncovering the unknown. It was on one of these drives that the pair turned down a brick road leading to rows of orange trees overlooking a lake called Sybelia. As the pair sat and watched the sunset glisten over

the shore, Smith decided to build his artist studio and a compound for artists on that very spot, later called The Research Studio.



For many years, Smith continued these driving tours on the same sand roads, searching for new scenes for his paintings as he weaved through the state. Often finding himself completely alone in the Florida landscape, Smith aptly named the roads the “sand trails to solitude.” He painted the nature and communities he found himself surrounded by at the ends of these roads. The artists of The Research Studio also shared Smith’s explorative nature while wintering at the artist colony. Many of the artists meandered down the same winding sand roads, creating their own impressions of primarily African American communities.

In 1951, Smith wrote an article in Ford’s travel magazine, Ford Times, recollecting his time traveling through Florida. Only seven of Smith’s paintings accompanied the article; however, Smith created many works recounting his travels. A good portion of those, accompanied by the works of the Bok Fellows, are exhibited here. Join along, as we travel down the byways of Jules André Smith’s memories, and experience a Florida from long ago.

Meet Volunteer & Visitor Services Manager Dane Kolb

Dane has been on staff at the A&H since April 2019, and was recently promoted to Volunteer & Visitor Services Manager. You have seen his friendly face on the weekends at the front desk of the Maitland Art Center galleries. We asked Dane a few questions so you can get to know him a bit better...



Q: What’s your favorite part of A&H?

A: There is inspiration and art everywhere, not just in the galleries but in the physical walls and floors. No matter where you look there is something meticulously crafted to inspire all who walk through this campus.

Q: I am excited for my new role because it is everything I loved about my previous position. As a Museum Attendant, I was helping guests discover A&H and brightening up their days, and now along with that I am welcoming volunteers to do the same, who will then multiply that impact. I want guests to have a fun and engaging time, so it feels wonderful to be a part of that process.

Q: Can you share some of your interests outside of A&H?

A: I love to seek out challenging movies and exciting styles of cinema. Many of these films are the inspiration for the narrative sculptures I make, which, like Asian cinema, are bathed in neon colors.

Please contact Dane if you are interested in volunteering or if you have general questions about visiting A&H!

Founder's Spotlight: an in-depth look at one of André Smith's surreal paintings

by Exhibitions Manager Katie Benson

The Art & History Museums of Maitland is fortunate to house the largest group of artwork created by artist Jules André Smith. Comprised of pieces that span the entirety of the artist's life, the Smith collection provides invaluable insight into who our founder was as an artist and person. The collection displays Smith's love of travel, his prowess in theater set design, and his explorations in all types of artistry including architecture, etching, sculpture, and painting. Indeed, his creative works seem to bear his soul. But there are also a small group of pieces that leave us with more questions than answers. Today we will explore one such work in an attempt to unlock its mystery.

Untitled (pictured right) depicts an elderly woman sitting by a fireplace alight with exuberant flowers. The room, enveloped in deep hues of blues and blacks, is a departure from Smith's customary color palette. Other peculiarities include the six ghosts positioned behind the woman, whose mouth hangs agape with her bible laying precariously next to her, as if she had dropped it from a shocking realization. The only light in the room comes from the fireplace's glow and its reflection in a mirror a ghost is holding. The work appears to be dripping with a certain significance that we do not have the cipher for. But, like any good mystery, it also contains clues.

Smith preferred to explore different art methods, and did not limit himself to just one medium. Instead, he was known to simply create whatever came to his subconscious, often creating many styles of works at the same time. Surrealism was one movement that came to Smith's subconscious frequently, and *Untitled* is actually part of a series of three paintings created in 1946. All three works depict surreal moments featuring ghosts and aging figures, indicating that age and possibly death have significant meaning. In fact, the aging woman featured in *Untitled* is set in juxtaposition to a painting depicting a young girl, a stark contrast that perhaps explains the aging woman's look of shock.

Possibly the most revelatory clue can be found in Smith's 1946 sketchbook. The book first reveals a preparatory sketch for one of the paintings in the series. This sketch also features themes of aging, and the pages after it give insight into Smith's planning stages and his thought processes, continuing with sketches of other surreal works that Smith realized the same year, as well as a



rare mental note from the artist. Appearing beside a sketch of a man fading into black, the note reads: "The repeated sadness of the youth start with red and orange and fade out through blues into black—darkness". This quote seems to further acknowledge the apparent struggle Smith was having with growing older. Through these clues, we can now hypothesize that Smith, who was 66 at the time, painted *Untitled* as a way to process growing older after a fulfilling life of creative genius and adventure.



Artist-in Residence Lori Larusso

by guest writer Becky Bruni

How do we connect with the people among us? With the objects that surround us? With the issues that involve us? Our newest Artist-in-Residence paints in an effort to answer these questions.

“Seeking connection is fundamental to the human condition.” –Lori Larusso, current A&H Artist-in-Residence

Larusso arrived at the A&H campus on January 6th to begin her 6-week residency. As part of the AiR program, she is currently staying in André Smith’s former living quarters. So far Larusso has enjoyed exploring the campus, perusing André Smith’s personally curated library, meeting Artists-in-Action Mär Martinez and Leo Cordovi, and visiting nearby sites like the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey.

But most of her time has been spent working in the Bok Studio, originally built as a guesthouse and named for the Research Studio’s benefactor Mary Curtis Bok. Blank polymetal panels and cups of paintbrushes cover the tables while black and white inspiration images, sketches, and works in progress hang on the walls. Larusso’s process is organic and she is always working on multiple pieces at once.

From a single ice cream cone on a 12” canvas to a life-sized installation with a buffet table and a poodle shaped out of broccoli, Larusso’s work ranges in size and subject. But her artistic methodology remains the same: use the lens of food to examine broader topics in the world. For humans, food has always been essential to survival. Over time, it has evolved from being a basic necessity to an omnipresent force that reflects and shapes our very existence. Larusso harnesses this idea and dives deep into its implications.

Since we all make, consume, and interact with food, we can all recognize it. Larusso paints in a representational manner so her works are always accessible and relatable. In her “Coffee Service” series, silver pots show patches of reflected light, stout sugar bowls cast shadows, and a used coffee pot leaves brown rings on a tray. These beautifully realistic details draw viewers into a world of familiarity.

“My interest in representations of domestic spaces lies in the comfort that is implied, and...how this notion of comfort reduces the complexity that is present in the way these material forms were produced and came to occupy the domestic space.” –Lori Larusso

We may be familiar with what coffee in styrofoam cups, birthday cakes, and plastic takeout bags look like. But do we ever think about what these things represent? What went into making these things?

How do issues like class, gender, emotion, and

environmentalism affect how food is made, consumed, or presented? These are the questions that Larusso puts before us. Her paintings are not about food, but how food is about us.

We can’t wait to see what she creates next! Visit the A&H today to catch a glimpse of Lori Larusso’s working studio. Follow her on Instagram @lorilarusso for a taste of her A&H experience.



A&H in the Community



We were honored to participate in a walking tour by Dr. Scot French and John Beacham on MLK Day, during which they shared much of the history of Eatonville and how it intertwined with Maitland's history. 55 attendees walked over 3 miles, and ended at the A&H, where our Exhibitions Manager Katie Benson talked about the friendship between Zora Neale Hurston and our founder André Smith. Pictured on the left is the land in Eatonville that Hurston's family owned and she grew up on.

We celebrated our Moving Maitland exhibition with a new Trivia Night on December 1!



Prizes were awarded for best retro dress! Many thanks to **Holler Hyundai** and **Enzian Theater** for their partnerships on this event. We had so much fun that we plan to do it again... Watch for another history Trivia Night this Summer!



ART & HISTORY MUSEUMS
MAITLAND

231 W. Packwood Ave. | Maitland, FL 32751

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE EXPEDITE

The A&H is a non-profit organization supported by generous individual, business, government and community partners including:



Spring 2022 Newsletter

Upcoming at A&H

February

- 4 | Exhibition Opening Party for *The Recollections of Doretha Hair Truesdell: Alfred Hair and The Florida Highwaymen*
- 10 | Gallery Tour with the Chief Curator followed by Studio Visit with Artist-in-Residence Lori Larusso
- 16 | Landmark Society event by invitation
- 17 | Campus Architecture Tour
- 19 | Family Day - free admission & an exhibition-related activity from 10am-1pm

March

- 9 | Artist Talk with Artist-in-Action MJ Torrecampo
- 10 | Gallery Tour with the Chief Curator
- 18-20 | Winter Park Sidewalk Art Festival - visit A&H at the Children's Workshop area
- 24 | Campus Architecture Tour
- 26 | The Art Party gala (VIP 6-7pm, all 7-10pm)

April

- 13 | Artist Talk with Artist-in-Action Leo Cordovi
 - 14 | Gallery Tour with the Chief Curator
 - 17 | Closed for Easter
 - 23 | Highwaymen: Pop Up Exhibition and Sale (10am-4pm) + Printmaking Party (10am-1pm)
 - 28 | Campus Architecture Tour
- Save the date: Paranormal Investigations at the Waterhouse on Friday, May 13!*

Advance registration required for many events. Please visit our website to register and to discover even more events: artandhistory.org/events