

The Loupe

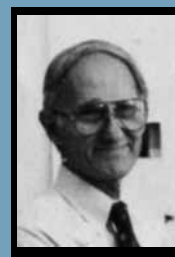
The newsletter of the UA Department of Art and Art History!

Summer 2013 ~ Special Edition



A SPECIAL DEDICATION

This issue of *The Loupe* is dedicated to two long-time supporters of the Department of Art and Art History: Farley Moody Galbraith and Alvin C. Sella. We are grateful for all the student, alumni, faculty and administrator contributions to this memorial edition. In this issue as well, we are proud to present a special focus on Thornton Willis, MA 1966, whose new paintings were exhibited in the Sarah Moody Gallery of Art in the fall of 2012. Gallery director Bill Dooley and graduate student Mark Barry share their experiences with the artist. Willis also generously shared his memories of his early years as an artist in Alabama and New York and what he learned from the renowned painter and UA faculty member who became his mentor, Melville Price.



Gallery director Bill Dooley and graduate student Mark Barry share their experiences with the artist. Willis also generously shared his memories of his early years as an artist in Alabama and New York and what he learned from the renowned painter and UA faculty member who became his mentor, Melville Price.

HONORS DAY 2013

This year, the department held ceremonies for scholarship and honors recipients in the Sella-Granata Art Gallery in Woods Hall, among works the 2013 Scholarship Winners Exhibition. Department chair, DR. CATHERINE PAGANI, assisted by office associate GEMINI SIGLER, presented certificates and award notices to the following undergraduate and graduate students:

ELIZABETH ALEXANDER: ELIZABETH B. BASHINSKY ENDOWMENT ART SCHOLARSHIP, MARY M. MORGAN MEMORIAL ART SCHOLARSHIP, ALVIN C. AND JOSEPH SELLA ART SCHOLARSHIP; **BENJAMIN BAILEY:** MARY M. MORGAN MEMORIAL ART SCHOLARSHIP; **HANNAH DELP:** DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY/

UA ALABAMA HIGH SCHOOL ART AWARD; **JULIE FRY:** WINDGATE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION ENDOWED ART SCHOLARSHIP; **ALEXANDRA GILBERT:** SOCIETY FOR THE FINE ARTS SCHOLARSHIP, BRADLEY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN ART, RUTLEDGE ENDOWMENT SCHOLARSHIP IN ART; **JAMES GRAY:** WILLIAM GARNETT ANDERSON ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP, ANN D. LARY SCHOLARSHIP FUND, PAUL R. JONES ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP; **ALEXANDRA HVAL:** ART STUDENTS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP, BRADLEY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN ART, MARILYN WILLIAMS ELMORE ENDOWED ART SCHOLARSHIP; **CAROLYN KERR:** MARY M. MORGAN MEMORIAL ART SCHOLARSHIP; **HEATHER LISTON:** JULIE PEAKE HOLADAY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP; **PATRICK LITTLE:** FARLEY MOODY GALBRAITH ENDOWED ART SCHOLARSHIP; **ALLYSON MABRY:** WINDGATE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION ENDOWED ART SCHOLARSHIP; **IAN MAGNUM:** JULIE PEAKE HOLADAY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP, MATTHEWS MEMORIAL ENDOWED GIFT SCHOLARSHIP, GRANATA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP; **ELIZABETH MUIR:** MARY M. MORGAN MEMORIAL ART SCHOLARSHIP; **ERIC NUBBE:** WINDGATE CHARITABLE

FOUNDATION ENDOWED ART SCHOLARSHIP; **KATRINA PHILLIPS:** FARLEY MOODY GALBRAITH ENDOWED ART SCHOLARSHIP; **GREG RANDALL:** RICHARD ZOELLNER SCHOLARSHIP IN ART; MYRA AND JIM MORGAN ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP; **REBECCA SAUNDERS:** JULIE PEAKE HOLADAY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP; **LORI TAYLOR:** WINDGATE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION ENDOWED ART SCHOLARSHIP; **KRISTEN TCHERNESHOFF:** WINDGATE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION ENDOWED ART SCHOLAR-



Art work by Alexandra Hval in the 2013 Scholarship Winners Exhibition in the Sella-Granata Art Gallery. More photos: <http://bit.ly/ArtHonorsDay2013>

CONTINUED ON PAGE TWO

SHIP; **SHANNON THACKER:** WINDGATE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION ENDOWED ART SCHOLARSHIP; **JOI WEST:** MARY M. MORGAN MEMORIAL ART SCHOLARSHIP; **ANGILA WILKINS:** FARLEY MOODY GALBRAITH ENDOWED ART SCHOLARSHIP. Our graduate student award winners are **SAMUEL SANDERSON:** JOSEPH AND CAROLYN BOLT FELLOWSHIP AWARD, VIRGINIA REMBERT LILES ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN ART, DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY CHAIR'S AWARD OF MERIT FOR GRADUATE STUDY IN ART HISTORY; **ASTRI SNODGRASS:** EMILY IRENE THAMES FELLOWSHIP; **VIRGINIA ECKINGER:** DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY CHAIR'S AWARD OF MERIT FOR GRADUATE STUDY IN STUDIO ART.

Also, senior art majors **ROBERT GOBEL** and **KELSIE DODSON** accepted the prestigious invitation to join PHI BETA KAPPA, the oldest honor society in the country. CONGRATULATIONS TO EVERYONE!

BON VOYAGE

We have said goodbye to several members of the department recently, among them professors TOM BARNES, UTA KRAPP and MINDY NANCARROW, all of whom retired this summer. Long time instructor and alumnus DANIEL LIVINGSTON, and office staff GEMINI SIGLER and BRITTANY QUINN are also moving onward and upward in the world! Good luck in all your new adventures!



Sometimes people like to slip out quietly. Indeed, Professor Emeritus Al Sella, not known for keeping things on the down-low, did just that, after almost five decades as an artist and teacher at UA. Professor Sella's quiet "arrivederci" on April 8, 2013, surprised many of us who had not prepared for a world without him. In honor of his long career and friendship with our department, we have collected reminiscences of his students, peers, administrators and friends. If reading these bring up your own memories of Al and you would like to share them with the UA art community, please email rachel.dobson@ua.edu. With grateful thanks to everyone who contributed to the communal memory of Al Sella...

The Loupe is the newsletter of the NASAD-accredited Department of Art and Art History, in The University of Alabama's College of Arts and Sciences, for students, alumni, faculty, staff and friends of the department. Please send correspondence to Rachel Dobson, Visual Resources Curator, rachel.dobson@ua.edu.

(lōöp), n. 1. a small magnifying glass used by jewelers or watchmakers, or for viewing photographic transparencies.

Al had a very straight-
It was visceral, emo-
little bit too brash
that he meant well.
that he had been
than our parents
and that de-
A compli-
was always
he was not
them. When we
class, it made him
and that was always
bring emotion out
for a moment come
a story or something
Mexico. The pur-
intimidate; he just
When he felt like
learned something
Sometimes he would grab
torted and say, "Paint like
sometimes. He would just give you a yes or a no. That can be
frustrating but it's great when you discover on your own what
he was actually
trying to get at.
He would never
really spell out
the problem for
you; it was our
job to under-
stand it in non-
verbal ways.
When you are
making visual
art, I think those ways are the best.

Discovering for yourself what the solutions are is very rewarding. He wanted us to do well, not just follow instructions. I



forward way of teaching.
tional and sometimes a
but we all understood
We also understood
an artist for longer
had been alive
manded respect.
ment from him
well deserved;
very liberal with
made good work in
genuinely happy
great to see. It would
of him and he would
alive. He might tell
about his time in
pose was never to
wanted to share.
sharing, we always
and we always laughed.

my arm with his fingers con-
this." His criticism was simple



CONTINUED ON PAGE THREE

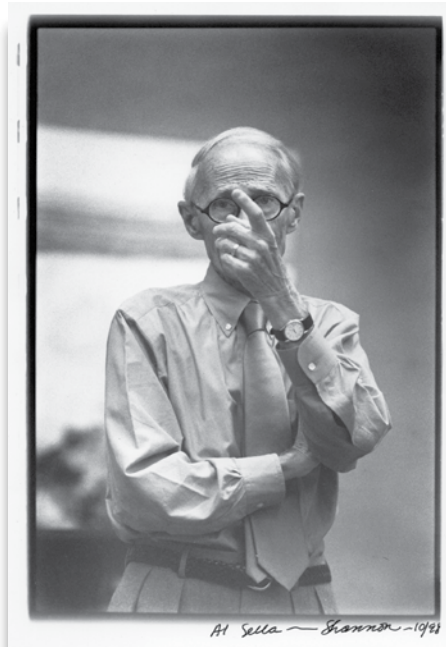
PAGE 2, LEFT: Al Sella in the 1980s, photo courtesy of Nicholas Sella. TOP RIGHT: Al Sella pausing for a candid photo in Woods Quad, April of 2009, by Rachel Dobson. BELOW RIGHT: Micah Craft, *Big 2*, oil on canvas, 2012, image courtesy of the artist.

PAGE 3, TOP: Sella teaching, photo signed "Shannon" and dated October 1998. BOTTOM: Megan Koza Young with friends, 1995 or 1996. She writes: "We were wearing red socks in honor of the cashmere socks Al frequently wore." Photo courtesy of Megan Young.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE TWO

also think he wanted us to genuinely enjoy the making of art. It was almost impossible to get frustrated with a 90-year old man wearing a driver's cap and suspenders of various colors, waving a baton near a nude. Al didn't really have a style of teaching; he had a style of personality. He was humorous, deep, genuine, instructive and interested in our success. He always told it like he saw it, and he usually saw things pretty well.

If your work had any value, Al would see it. You could always count on him being real with you. This had the potential to encourage some and discourage others. I was greatly encouraged by Al Sella. It was a blessing to have someone with such experience and personality help me along my journey. — MICAH CRAFT, BFA 2012 AND RECIPIENT OF THE ALVIN C. SELLA AND AND JOSEPH SELLA ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN 2009 AND 2011.



I was insufficiently aggressive or erasing more than putting charcoal to paper. Although utterly honest, he was never judgmental, for which I was grateful.

I didn't see him again until I visited him in hospice three years later. I was crushed by how exhausted he looked, even at 90 years old, he'd been so vigorous both in his teaching and in biking to and from Woods Hall every day. However I couldn't help but smile because it was marvelous to see him again. I showed him a nearly complete portrait I'd been working on, of which he said, "You did a good job." I can conceive of no higher praise. I miss him terribly, but whenever I draw or paint the human figure, I can almost hear his voice in my mind and recall the feeling of his looking over my shoulder on the third floor of Woods, scrutinizing my every move.

In fond memory of Al Sella, I hereby solemnly swear to keep painting, and to do a good job. — ERIK HESTEVOLD, BFA 2012

I used to take Sella home occasionally and always tried to have the right music on hand...one such album, Bryan Ferry's "As Time Goes By" would cause Al to break into song, keeping time with his hands as we rode along to his home. He would say, "Now that's great music!" — VICKI RIAL, MFA 1996 AND EXHIBITIONS COORDINATOR, SARAH MOODY GALLERY OF ART

We part with a bold soul...the legend lives on. — DEBORAH HUGHES, BFA 1971

I met Al Sella in his figure drawing class in fall 2009, where I found sanctuary during a turbulent period in my life. Sella wanted his students to take an aggressive approach to art, which his classroom's atmosphere of juxtaposed tranquility and furious focus facilitated beautifully. With little introduction, he immediately had us drawing. He addressed our work with utter and sometimes brutal honesty, but never malice or disrespect. He did have a presence that made it almost terrifying when he paused at my table, yet when he did speak to me, his words were only ever of encouragement. Seldom did he find fault with what I was doing; it was chiefly what I wasn't doing that was problematic, as when



What I learned from Al Sella can not be contained in a circle, a square or a triangle. What Al Sella taught me was how to think outside the lines, in fact, how to fly. I am so grateful that I was his student and able to brush shoulders with a man who never left me without words, except once. That was the time when

I saw one of his figure drawings. What a line; what beauty. If only he had unleashed that academic study of the figure to his students more often. I stood in the middle of the room and took a deep breath to shake off the goose bumps on my arms. He had us to read Search For the Real by Hans Hofmann. I am still searching, and still looking at making compositions, learned from a man who shared his New York School philosophy. I am his student for life and I never waver from learning to think outside the box, to fly and to figure out how I will safely land using the elements of

CONTINUED ON PAGE EIGHT

Alumni Spotlight: Mentors & Models

THORNTON WILLIS



THORNTON WILLIS is a renowned member of the second generation of Abstract Expressionists and an alumnus of The University of Alabama. He visited us last year on the occasion of an exhibition of his paintings in the Sarah Moody Gallery of Art. During his stay, he spent time with students and faculty in the department, made studio visits, talked to grad students about their work and their careers, talked to gallery visitors and gave a talk on his work. He also generously gave of his historical memory with an interview, and contributed his reflections on Professor Melville Price, who taught here from 1958 until Price's sudden death in 1970.

Following here are three short articles. Two are experiential impressions

of Thornton Willis, the first by BILL DOOLEY, who curated Willis's 2012 exhibition of paintings. The second is by MARK BARRY, a graduate student in painting who recently spent time with Willis in New York after his visit to Tuscaloosa. The third consists of excerpts of Thornton Willis's memories of learning from Melville Price, as his painting teacher, and as an artist.



Bill Dooley writes: *I spent a day with Thornton Willis at his New York studio back in*

2002, one that I enjoyed quite a lot because he has an easy way about him. He's not one to rush to judgment, is a good listener and observant. Like his manner, Thornton's studio practice is straightforward, different from a lot of artists working in the city whose work was bound up in theories and ideas.

It was with these long-ago impressions that I met Thornton again on the occasion of his exhibition in the Sarah Moody Gallery of Art, this time in Tuscaloosa at the university where he had studied, mostly with the late professors Mel Price and Howard Goodson. His easy-going character traits were still at work; I enjoyed seeing that they were not limited to being in use only on his turf. Having a gallery filled with his paintings was such a thrill for me, and added to that the presence of Thornton: it was "a magic moment." It was rewarding, as well, to see how he engaged with students and gallery goers.

In that time and place, Thornton embodied my hope that our community will embrace our gallery programs though the content of the art works might be unfamiliar or intimidating. He served as the best ambassador one could hope for because he has made art that adds to the collective conversation - and he participates in the conversation. In the end it was very affirming to have Thornton Willis visit the department where he had long ago established his sensibilities about painting. WTD



In January 2013, Mark Barry, a candidate for the MFA in painting, spent the day with Willis and his wife Vered Lieb in their loft and Willis' studio in SoHo in Manhattan. This is an excerpt from an essay Barry wrote about his time with them:

CORNER BEEF WITH THORNTON AND VERED -- We sat in their kitchen for a good while discussing art over beers and homemade corned beef and cabbage slaw sandwiches. We talked about many things, including Wade Guyton's show at the Whitney and how technology can be both a blessing and a crutch. When spending time with Thornton, I found



his desire to understand and know more about art, and painting specifically, to be addictive and inspiring. He has so much knowledge and experience, and he's still digging.

The studio visit happened while Thornton was in the process of making work for an upcoming solo show at Elizabeth Harris Gallery. There were a number of freshly completed paintings, and some pieces still in progress. Process was a major topic of discussion. At one point, while looking at one of his paintings from a distance, he noticed something he hadn't before and grumbled under his breath as he moved in for a closer look. Immediately, I stepped back quietly in order to watch his process in action. It lasted only a few minutes, but watching him dive into his work like that was wonderful to witness. His attention to detail while simultaneously embracing looseness and accidental marks is something I'd like to capture in my work. MB

Thornton Willis: I grew up in Northern Florida and Southern Alabama and, after three years in the military I was discharged



"Tuscaloosa was a cultural oasis for me, with a varied and remarkable group of people." ~ Thornton Willis

from the Marine Corps in 1957 and returned home to go to college on the G.I. Bill. In the late 1950's and early 1960's I became very interested in painting. During that time I did all that I could to learn about American contemporary painting in particular. It was clear that New York City was the center of activity, but there was no chance of my going there. During my undergraduate years I learned that Melville Price, a painter



thoroughly connected to the Abstract Expressionists, was teaching painting at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. In the summer of 1964, I enrolled in graduate school at Tuscaloosa with the specific purpose of meeting Mr. Price. I not only met Mel Price but I took an advanced undergraduate painting course with him and, from that summer semester until I received my M.A. degree in 1966, he was my primary teacher.

Mel encouraged me to paint and to go, in a sense, wherever the painting might take me. Eventually it did take me to New York City where I have lived and worked since 1967. But in 1964, 1965 and 1966 – the years I was in Tuscaloosa working with Mel Price – painting was changing, or at least it seemed to be, if you read the art magazines, which we all did. Clement Green-

CONTINUED ON PAGE ELEVEN

IMAGE CREDITS: The four images of Willis paintings here are courtesy of the Elizabeth Harris Gallery. PAGE 4, HEADER: *Space Rhyme*, detail; TOP LEFT: *Black Warrior*; MIDDLE LEFT: *Space Rhyme*; BOTTOM LEFT: Willis in his Soho studio; photo by Mark Barry; MIDDLE RIGHT: Willis talking to UA students. BOTTOM RIGHT: *Streetwise*.

PAGE 5: TOP LEFT: Willis and Barry, photo by Mark Barry; BOTTOM LEFT: Willis in May of 1966 in the *Tuscaloosa News*; TOP RIGHT: Willis in the Sarah Moody Gallery of Art during his exhibition; FOOTER: Four works by Melville Price, each: *untitled (Study for Black Warrior)*, 1961, oil and crayon on paper, 9 -1/2 x 12-1/2" each, SMGA Permanent Collection.



SARAH MOODY GALLERY OF ART ~ PERMANENT COLLECTION



In January of this year Farley Moody Galbraith, the primary patron of the Sarah Moody Gallery of Art for the past 25 years, died. Because of Galbraith's longstanding interest and her endowment, the gallery (originally supported by and named for Galbraith's mother, Sarah McCorkle Moody) enjoys a strong reputation in the national art community. This issue is dedicated in part to Mrs. Galbraith. Bill Dooley, director of the gallery since 1988, has written a tribute to her, below.

Farley Moody Galbraith dedicated significant support to the arts throughout the state. One of the founders of the Shakespeare Festival at its original location in Anniston, Mrs. Galbraith was generous to arts organizations in her native Calhoun County, as well as those at The University of Alabama. She added significantly to support initially given by her mother to the art department at the time of



Robert Rauschenberg, *Strawboss*, 27/50, 1970, lithograph, 30 x 21¾", Sarah Moody Gallery of Art Purchase Fund and C. B. Marshall.

In 1989, the SMGA Purchase Fund was created by Farley Galbraith to support the production of changing exhibitions devoted to important contemporary arts programming, such as this Rauschenberg lithograph, one of several in the Permanent Collection.

the renovation of Garland and Woods Halls. Mother and daughter both believed that art exhibitions are a key component of the university's fine arts cultural enrichment and the education of studio artists and art historians.

In 1989, Mrs. Galbraith established an endowed exhibition fund to produce changing exhibitions devoted to important contemporary arts programming. She wanted to make sure there was enough financial support available to attract significant artists' exhibits so that UA students and community would have direct access to notable and influential art. Mrs. Galbraith loved the idea that the work of an internationally known artist such as Robert Rauschenberg could be on view in the department's art gallery on Woods Quad. Her support was intended to bring the culture here. She wanted visitors to be able to see such a show as many times as they wanted without having to travel to an urban center.

Periodically Mrs. Galbraith would call on me to ask how the endowment was supporting exhibit production. Since it was an endowed account, there were a few years when a funding shortfall might require us to adjust our programming accordingly. This did not sit that well with her, and as a result, she made additional gifts to the endowment so that it became more and more robust. In her

mind, she did not want us to be limited in programming by a lack of funding!

Over the years, we have been fortunate to be able to maintain a high quality of contemporary arts programming for UA students and the surrounding community. The gallery is an amazing amenity for the Department of Art and Art History, thanks in large part to the sustained support created by Mrs. Galbraith. She was modest about her role as



This mixed media drawing by Al Sella, dated 1966, was recently given to the Sarah Moody Gallery Permanent Collection by the Farley Moody Galbraith estate. It hung in Mrs. Galbraith's home in Anniston for many years along with a larger painting by Sella from the same period. Bill Dooley puts this work in context:

This and other earlier abstract works on paper forecast Sella's investigation and active engagement of his paintings with various elements of drawing. He accelerated this process using a variety of drawing materials such as charcoal, graphite, and pastel as integrated elements in his abstract paintings that followed for the next 30-plus years.

supporter of the arts and did not wish to have her name in lights. She herself enjoyed making art and understood the fragility of the creative process and its need for stable funding. She was a solid supporter who expected real-life benefits to come from her gifts, such as an education rich in the arts. That was thanks enough for her. It is my hope that the Sarah Moody Gallery of Art will continue to meet the high expectations enabled by her endowment. It is truly exciting to be part of a gallery program that has had such a dedicated and significant patron as Farley Moody Galbraith.

— William T. Dooley



Beverly Semmes: *Starcraft* Sarah Moody Gallery of Art AUG 29 - OCT 4

Beverly Semmes is an internationally acclaimed artist who creates environments of lush textiles and accompanying materials. Organized by Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, TN, *Starcraft* features glass and clay vessels with oversized cloth garments. Art critic Patterson Sims writes in the accompanying catalog: "They are costumes in search of their characters, patiently seeking and awaiting women—or maybe men, children, or a culture—big enough to wear them." The vessels's freeform and coarse features contrast with the smoothness of the fabric. Sims: "They are objects, not objects for use." Semmes is the recipient of many awards and grants: an NEA Fellowship (1994-95), a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship (1997) and an award from the Art Critics International Association (2001). Semmes has had solo exhibitions in numerous places: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Philip Morris Gallery, New York. Semmes lives in New York City and teaches at NYU and Pratt Institute.

FALL EXHIBITIONS 2013

AUG 21-SEP 20 *Dominic Lippillo and Mark Schoon*,
Sella-Granata Art Gallery (SGG)

AUG 29-OCT 4 *Beverly Semmes: Starcraft*, SMGA

SEP 5 Opening reception for *Starcraft*, SMGA, 6-8 p.m.

SEP 5 *Lippillo and Schoon* reception, SGG, 6:00 p.m.

SEP 30-OCT 25 *Meredith Randall MA Exhibition*, SGG

NOV 11-DEC 6 *Current Graduate Student Exhibition*, SGG
(reception TBA)

<http://art.ua.edu/site/calendar-of-events/>



HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT ~ FACULTY-STAFF NEWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE

composition. He will always have a special place as mentor on my shoulder, and I will listen for him to cull up his passion. And what passion he had — he was Italian! I will always remember him riding his bike to class along University Boulevard with his hat and tweed scarf and park his bike at the bottom of Woods Hall. And waiting for his big smile. He was good for me.

— SHARON LONG, MFA 1983

In his many visits to my 4th floor painting studio, Al knew when to critique and when to point me in a direction for gathering information about my present work. He was always sincere and always had something to say that made you feel like what you were reaching for was within your grasp. He was not an “art for art sake” instructor and his questioning attitude of art movements and their devotees made you feel that exploration of your subject matter in the real world would always yield the ideas you were after. He could always refer you to an artist to research or explore to help you in your own creative explorations. He could be funny and make you laugh about any number of things: getting too serious about what you think your work was about; the ugly “baby sh*t green” I would put in my landscapes; his ethnicity and the joys of his Italian heritage as it related to the history of art.

I deeply admired his art work. His passion for painting was very moving to me and as my own connections to art grew and I progressed, I always felt the gravity of Al’s beautiful work pulling me along and making me search for my own connections to how my art related to my world. He made me a believer in working to find how my own perceptions became real in my photography and in my drawing later on. Such a passionate, funny, sincere, man.

— BOB MARCHIONY, BA 1969



I have known Al Sella for the entirety of my 36 years at the University of Alabama. When asked for a memory or anecdote, of course there are many that come to mind. Al’s humor, audacity, and energy were always apparent. His dedication to his art was inspirational.

Shortly after Creative Campus moved into its new head-

quarters in Maxwell Hall, I contacted Al about the possibility of doing a one-man show of his work in Maxwell. We had redesigned the space with some capability for displaying art, and Al was our choice for a first exhibit. Al was already in his late eighties or early nineties, still riding his bike to campus, and still teaching. I asked him the last time he had a one-man show on campus, and he thought for a while, and gave a date that meant it had been nearly fifty years!

My first assumption for the show was that it would be truly retrospective in nature, offering some insight into the changing nature of Al’s work over the years. But Al immediately disabused me of that notion saying that almost all of his previous art had been sold and was scattered throughout the country. He said that he had plenty of new art — work from the prior two years — to fill Maxwell Hall. I was blown away by his sustained level of activity. The show did take place, and as Al directed it included only recent work. During the few weeks that the show was up, we

had visitors drop in from throughout the state and region to see Al’s newest work.

For me, Al remains an inspirational example of how to age and remain passionately engaged in the making of art.

— HANK LAZER, ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CREATIVE CAMPUS, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, AND POET.



CONTINUED ON PAGE NINE

IMAGE CREDITS: ☞ PAGE 8, TOP: Sella poses with a ceramic sculpture, *Ohio Red Man* by Jack Earl, during an exhibition in the Sarah Moody Gallery of Art in 2008; photo by Rachel Dobson. BOTTOM: Al Sella painting in his studio about 1965; photo courtesy Nicholas Sella. ☞ PAGE 9, LEFT: Sella in the 1980s. RIGHT: Sky Shineman with colleagues in Athens.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE EIGHT

An important moment in my art education was after a few months of drawing in his class. One afternoon he came around the circle of drawing tables and nudged me with his pointing stick, and said, "You got it, girl." A few weeks later he tore my drawing in half telling me it was "too precious" to me, which was true. There was something about those two things — the harshness and the gentleness — mixed together that made me respect him for being exactly who he was. He was from a different time and place than this Enterprise, Ala., girl had ever known. The boldness in his teaching gained my trust and because I trusted him to tell me exactly what he thought, I learned from him. —JENNY FINE, BFA 2006

One of my clearest, most fond memories from painting class was Al standing behind me, arms crossed with a big smile, saying, "I see you have a tiger by the tail." — DEBORAH HUGHES

"He's definitely a man I thought would live forever." PHYLLIS HARRIS, an art student from the 1970s, wrote that she was a life model in Sella's and Howard Goodson's drawing classes before she herself began taking art classes, at Alabama. She added, "There was a level of decorum and quiet in Goodson's classes and, oh lordy, was it ever a different ball game with Sella!"



During my first official week as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in 2000, I met Al Sella. I was walking to Woods Hall and he rode up on his now infamous bike wearing his characteristic patterned socks and wild tie. I introduced myself to him, and he informed me, "You should know I'm the best artist you have." Although he was officially retired at the time, he was still teaching because he loved art and sharing it with others.

Al was distinctive in more ways than just his attire and his mode of transportation. The stories that are incredible to me are the ones about his unique method of motivating students. Susan McCollough, a UA alumna and accomplished artist,

shared with us at the unveiling of her painting, *Sella*, one of her fondest memories of Al. She told us about the day he took a paintbrush full of black paint and defaced a piece she had been working on for some time, using some choice expletives to describe it. The experience only drove her to work harder, she said.

My own daughter Susan, who minored in art at UA, came home one day and told me that she had finally "made it." She shared with me that in one of her classes, Al came up to her to ask what she was working on. After she described to him what she was trying to convey in the piece, he took one look at it, again used some choice expletives and promptly threw her work in the trash. While some may have perceived such an action as demoralizing, it was like a badge of honor to have your work "critiqued" by Al Sella. Susan, like so many other students who worked with Al, knew that this just meant he cared about her work and her progress.

— ROBERT OLIN, DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

FACULTY-STAFF NEWS

Instructors AMY LEEPARD and SONJA ROSSOW, and alumnus SCOTT STEPHENS (MFA 1983) participated in the recent *Print-making in Alabama* in the Alabama Artists Gallery at the RSA Tower in downtown Montgomery. Multiple approaches to screen-printing, letterpress, and hand-crafted artist books as well as examples of photogravure, cyanotype, and linoleum block relief printing by twelve Alabama artists were on display. For more information go to www.arts.alabama.gov.

In June, SKY SHINEMAN presented her paper "Painting as Walking," at the 4th Annual International Conference on Visual and Performing Arts in Athens, Greece. She wrote: "Both painting and walking are ventures of sensation and perception, familiarity and discovery. Requiring an attuned physicality and heightened awareness they are direct, intuitive, possibly primitive yet sophisticated acts. When walking one establishes a path while welcoming alternate routes, placing the body in motion with intention, poise and awareness. For some it is the same when painting."



CONTINUED ON PAGE TEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE FIVE

berg's art criticism and his influence over New York painting seemed to reign supreme.

As a young painter Mel met and knew well Franz Kline, Bill deKooning, and Jackson Pollock: all his seniors by at least ten years. Later he exhibited with them and others involved in the movement labeled "action painting" by Harold Rosenberg. In 1950, Mel Price's work was included in the seminal show known as the 9th Street Show. There is no doubt that Mel was part of "The Club," and it is important to realize that he was at the very forefront of the Abstract Expressionist movement in America. As my teacher, Price insisted upon a complete and focused involvement with painting and he encouraged experimentation.

Tuscaloosa was a cultural oasis for me, with a varied and, in many ways, remarkable group of people. We had a very good art department. Mel was the star painter but there was a very strong faculty of artists that knew what was happening in the art world and had been all drawn to the same university at the same time. There was Joseph Bolt, PhD from Harvard, Ted Klitzke, PhD from the University of Chicago, who both taught art history. There was Jack Granata, who had built the sculpture department and was that area's top professional. Granata had grown up in Hoboken, New Jersey, and, after serving in the Navy during WWII, studied at Columbia University and NYU before taking a teaching position at Tuscaloosa in the 1950s. His work was included in an important survey exhibition of current sculpture at the MoMA.

Also teaching at Tuscaloosa at that time was Richard Zoellner who was a nationally known and widely respected printmaker and an excellent teacher who also had spent time working in New York City. Along with Mel Price we had two other professors who taught painting. They were Alvin Sella who studied primarily in Mexico and knew Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco. Al was a lyrical painter who worked very large. The other was Howard Goodson, an abstract painter who was originally from Alabama and had gone to NYU for his MFA in the early 1950s. It was an extraordinary group and I was lucky enough to have landed there.

We also had a guest artist program that brought in artists

from around the country. One visiting artist I remember well was Theodoros Stamos, a painter from New York City and a close friend of Rothko's. I took the opportunity to ask Stamos if I should go to New York to complete my studies. He looked at me and said, "Why would you do that? You have Mel Price here." TW



FACULTY NEWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE NINE

Now that he has time to do what he likes, Associate Professor Emeritus ROBERT MELLOWN has been playing in the dirt. This spring, he was Architectural Historical Consultant for the large downtown archaeological dig, "1 Tu495," which covered the northwest quadrant of the intersection of University Blvd. and Greensboro Ave, officially known as "Block 15 of the 1821 Original City Survey of Tuscaloosa." It has been the site of white settlement since at least 1815, and Mellown says there is a large amount of historical data that can be extracted from it.

Mellown's new guidebook, *The University of Alabama - A Guide to the Campus and Its Architecture* (UA Press, September 2013), is a exponentially updated version of Mellown's original 1988 edition, and scrambling to keep up with the whirlwind of construction and destruction of the Witt and Bonner administrations. "In addition to updated sections devoted to the university's historic landmarks...new sections account for the acquisition of Bryce Hospital's campus, the expansions at Bryant-Denny Stadium to accommodate the growing Crimson Tide fan base, and the burgeoning student recreation facilities, playing fields, and residential communities." The book is scheduled to be published this fall.

ONGOING & UPCOMING EVENTS

JAMEY GRIMES'S sculpture is up now in a two-man exhibition at the Birmingham Public Library's 4th Floor Gallery, June 24-August 2. *Fusion: Sculpture by Jamey Grimes and Charles Clary.*



IMAGE CREDITS: PAGE 10, TOP: Thornton Willis, detail, *Black Warrior*, courtesy of the Elizabeth Harris Gallery. BOTTOM: Detail of a sculpture by Jamey Grimes at the BPL, courtesy of the artist.

ALUMNI NEWS

In the fall, OLIVIA WEST (BA 2013) will be attending graduate school at the Savannah College of Art and Design in the Themed Entertainment Design MFA program. Among her many accomplishments, West was the department's first Art Ambassador and helped organize the group: undergraduate studio and history majors who help recruit new students and represent Art and Art History at UA and community functions.

KATHERINE LADD (BA 2012) has been working as an intern at the Birmingham Museum of Art and as director of the Red Dot Gallery in Homewood, Alabama. She recently graduated with an art history major and an African American Studies minor.

IRA HILL (BFA 1998, photography and sculpture) writes that he has been practicing sculpture ever since graduation. "Today I am preparing to depart for a Artist Fellowship at Salem Art Works, Salem NY." He recently completed campus commissions for Valdosta State University and North Florida Community College in Madison, FL. In 2012 he was awarded Artist in Residence at the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis. "My favorite UA art school memory was getting to meet Mel Chin. He is an amazing influence on my ideas. Still love Bama." Hill's work can be seen at irahillsculpture.com.

EMEE BARROW (BFA 2013) graduated in the spring in painting and printmaking. She lives in Birmingham and is applying to graduate school for art history and hopes to begin in the fall of 2014.

MEGAN K. (MITCHELL) YOUNG (BFA 1998, MA 2006) was appointed Director of the Dishman Art Museum and Assistant Professor of Art History at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, in October, 2012. She is a doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas. Her dissertation, "After the Deluge: Contemporary Artists Engage Katrina," examines instances of contemporary art that investigate the ramifications of this catastrophic event in various ways. Young is particularly interested in the way visual interpretations of trauma can create or recreate collective or cultural identity in the wake of catastrophe. Before her museum appointment, she served as the Mellon Foundation/Loo Family curatorial intern in European and American painting, sculpture and decorative arts at the Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas.

ALUMNI, we always like to hear from you! Please email your art news, exhibition announcements and images to rachel.dobson@ua.edu.



William T. Dooley, *Formation Study with Movement*, 2012, pencil, oil pastel and gouache on Rives BFK. Image size: 8 x 7 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE TEN

As part of the Liberty Day Celebration in Columbiana, Alabama, the Shelby County Arts Council features *The Great Land Slide*, an exhibition of work of alumnus MAX NEWTON (MA, ART ED., 1990) and BILL DOOLEY, now through July 26.

SKY SHINEMAN will a solo exhibition of paintings at the Birmingham Public Library, August 12 - September 20th in the 4th Floor Gallery of the Central Library. Everyone is invited to the reception Saturday, August 17th, at 3:00 p.m. For more info here: <http://www.bham.lib.al.us/Exhibits/>.

CRAIG WEDDERSPOON is a 2013 Alabama State Council on the Arts Visual Arts Fellowship Recipient. He will have a solo exhibition at the Birmingham Museum of Art December 15, installing his sculptures at the beginning of December. Go to: www.artsbma.org/. And check out his interview on the Alabama Arts Radio Series: arts.state.al.us/actc/1/listserverindividual/20130707wedderspoon.htm.

The Loupe

BACK PAGE

Thanks to Professor Emeritus of English Dwight Eddins for graciously allowing us to print this slightly edited version of a poem he wrote for his old friend and sometime collaborator on the occasion of Sella's retirement party in 1996. Eddins read the original version aloud, before Al and the crowd of guests, out on the balcony of Garland Hall. When he kindly gave permission to reprint selected stanzas here, he wrote, "I think it catches the spirit of this marvelous (and unique) friend."



FOR AL, ON HIS RETIREMENT: A MALEDICTION FORBIDDING MOURNING

Here's a toast to Alvin Sella,
A shy, retiring sort of fellow,
Who's never raised his voice at us,
And hasn't learned to storm and cuss.

"But this is not the Al we know,"
You say, and quite correctly so.
I speak of Al two minutes old,
Before he learned to nag and scold.

Three minutes later, with a yell,
He gave the nurse and doctor hell,
And uttered the first words he'd spoken:
"I hate this goddamned dump, Hoboken."

. . .

And then the great New Jersey mouth
Decided to invade the South,
Declaring his uncivil war
On would-be painters near and far.

His students dreamed of easy As,
Hoping Al would lavish praise,
And that, when they confessed their fear,
Just like Van Gogh, he'd lend an ear.

But Al, instead of playing Santa,
Played General Sherman to their Atlanta,
Setting their canvases aflame
With words of ridicule and shame.

. . .

Now he's going, by his own choice,
But not too far—that raucous voice
Will always echo through the Quad,
As confident as that of God.

LEFT: Al Sella painting in the 1980s, image courtesy Nick Sella.

TOP: Sella in 2009 at the University Club, photo by Rachel Dobson.

