



News Release

For Immediate Release
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AMSET shares late artist George Wentz's joy of life

On view July 24 through September 26
Opening Reception: 6-8 p.m., Friday, July 23

BEAUMONT, Texas — The Southeast Texas community lost a beloved friend with the death of artist George Wentz in March 2010. Fortunately, his joy lives on through his vibrant artwork collected by many and will be featured in an exhibition at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas (AMSET) from July 24 through Sept. 26. An opening reception will be held from 6-8 p.m. on Friday, July 23 to remember Wentz. It will include a gallery talk by Andy Coughlan of the artist's life and work.

George Wentz: Joie de Vivre is a retrospective exhibition organized by AMSET consisting of nearly 40 paintings, drawings, and collages. The title of the exhibition, *Joie de Vivre*, derives from a French expression meaning "joy of life or living." The expression perfectly captures Wentz's energetic and always optimistic spirit and zest for life. The title also describes Wentz's artistic style, which is defined as gestural and abstract expressionist with colors and vivacity reminiscent of the French post-impressionists. The exhibition will feature works from the artist's early years in the 1960s to paintings created days before his death. Many of the works featured in the exhibition are on loan from local collectors and enthusiasts of his art. Wentz's most recent collection of paintings and drawings housed in his South Park home was bequeathed to the art museum upon his passing.

"George Wentz was very involved with organizing this exhibition until his untimely passing and was extremely enthusiastic about it," said AMSET Executive Director Lynn Castle. "We are pleased to be able to continue his wishes and celebrate him as a great artist and man."

Wentz was born in Beaumont in 1945 and worked as an artist here for four decades. He began drawing and painting at an early age and continued developing his artistic interests and talents in high school where he studied under the esteemed Beaumont artist Herman Hugg. Originally a pre-med major at Lamar University, Wentz realized his true interest and love of art when he took a design and composition class. His drawing and painting techniques were based in formal instruction by Lamar University art professors Jerry Newman, Robert O'Neill and Robert Madden. Wentz studied alongside other notable artists such as John Alexander, Lynn Sweat, Frank Gerriettes, and the late Allie Bill Skelton. Challenged by the paintings of Beaumont-born artist Richard Stout, Wentz succeeded in furthering new avenues of applying color, form, values and extending space to paint new works inspired by Stout.

"Art is my life," Wentz said in one of many meetings with AMSET Curator of Exhibitions Sarah Hamilton. "The gamut of physical beauty fascinates me," he said. "To me painting is like love-making. There is no end to it!"

In addition to the numerous homes around Southeast Texas and AMSET's collection, Wentz's artwork can be found in the Sinatra estate, the John Denver estate and the Liza Minnelli collection.



George Wentz, *Untitled*, 2009,
acrylic on paper, 18 x 23 inches.

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News Release

Women Artists: Selections from the AMSET Permanent Collection

In addition to *Joie de Vivre*, AMSET will also continue our summer series of exhibits from the permanent collection. From July 24 through Sept. 26, visitors can view *Women Artists: Selections from the AMSET Permanent Collection*, a selection of artwork created by women artists represented in AMSET's collection. The exhibition will include photography, painting, sculpture, mixed media, textiles, and printmaking.

Consisting of 40 works primarily by contemporary women artists either born in Texas or who have spent a majority of their career working in the state, the exhibition has a wide scope. Works on view will include fine art and also vernacular art by artists such as Bessie Harvey and Sarah Mary Taylor. Beaumont artists featured in the show include Patricia Cargill, Maudee Carron, Cherry Sha Ela Re El and Janna Fulbright.

In addition to showcasing the theme of women artists, the exhibition will also highlight how the geographical location and gender of the artist influenced the artwork.

"In curating an exhibition with a wide scope, it is important to reflect on and attempt to identify the parallels that may or may not exist in the artists' works featured," said Hamilton.

The intent of the permanent collection exhibition series is to expand visitors understanding of the museum's holdings and to allow for artwork in the collection to be researched and highlighted in a new capacity. While a number of spaces in the museum showcase permanent collection works year-round, this time specifically promotes an introspective look into what distinguishes AMSET's collection in the community and on a national level.

For more information on either of these exhibitions, call (409) 832-3432 or visit www.amset.org.

Funding for these exhibitions was generously provided by CommunityBank of Texas, C. Homer and Edith Fuller Chambers Charitable Foundation, Helen Caldwell Locke and Curtis Blakey Locke Charitable Foundation, City of Beaumont, Dorothy Anne Conn, the Southeast Texas Arts Council and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

Through unique collections, exhibitions, public programs and outreach in the visual arts, the mission of the Art Museum of Southeast Texas is to provide education, inspiration and creative vision throughout Southeast Texas.



Mary McCleary, *I Fled Him Down the Days and Down the Nights*, 2000, mixed media collage on paper, 45 x 70.5 inches.

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AMSET is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization.
Hours: M-F: 9am-5pm Sat.: 10am-5pm Sun: Noon-5pm Closed Major Holidays
Admission: Free Suggested Donation: \$2.00
Wheelchair and stroller accessible