

August 9, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Debbie Grazier, SAMA-Bedford Coordinator
(814) 589-3020

Travis Mearns, Public Relations Coordinator
(724) 238-6015

SAMA-BEDFORD EXHIBITION TO CELEBRATE LIFE AND CAREER OF MOUSE GRASS

Bedford – The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Bedford is pleased to announce the opening of its latest exhibition, *A Painterly Mouse: A Lifetime of Flora & Fauna*. The exhibition celebrates the life and career of the late Bedford County artist Melinda “Mouse” Myers Grass. The exhibition opens August 23 in the Museum’s Ashe and Regional galleries and will remain on view through November 17.

The exhibition celebrates Grass’s oeuvre with more than 60 incredible oil paintings. Nature is often at the center of her work, including garden views and animal subjects. An award-winning gardener whose gardens were floral works of art, Grass was regarded as much for her gardening skills as for her amazing artistic talents.

“We as a society, seem destined to be stuck in the information frenzy of a rapidly expanding internet world that grows larger and more impersonal as each moment passes,” Grass once said. “In response, I find that I am drawn to the intricate beauty of the small and seemingly insignificant. I approach each painting as the recording of a moment, preserved in both thought and time. Each painting is like a mirror, in that it reflects both my life and the solitude of the everyday world around us – a world that seems to be overlooked more and more easily as each day goes by.”

A graduate of Everett High School, Grass earned a B.A. in art history from Dickinson College. She then attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts for four years, a time that would forever change her. “In September 1966 she first entered the doors of the Academy,” recalled her surviving husband Robert “Robin” Grass. “Dressed in her best Laura Ashley printed outfit, she came face-to-face and got to shake the hands of what would shortly come to be known as the counterculture: beatniks, hippies and freaks. There was nothing that could have prepared her for this big left turn in the Great Society.”

Mrs. Grass met her future husband during her time at the Academy. Those years taught the couple many lessons, not only about art, but also about life.

“The one thing we had in common was the reason we were there,” said Mr. Grass. “Conversations ran the gamut from A to Z. But ultimately, what we learned became our credo. [It] was both simple and profound. She learned that to be an artist was less about the product and

more about the mindset. There was no greater reward in art than the reward of doing it. To think creatively was to be creative and that creative process was what made you an artist. She found that if you learned that, then you achieved the real education that was offered at the Academy.

“It was a lesson she learned well. For the rest of her life, she lived each day as if she were creating her own masterpiece.”

The Grasses moved to Everett in 1975 where they refurbished an old iron foundry. By the following year, the couple opened the Foundry Art Studio where they hosted exhibitions and taught art, passing along the lessons learned at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. The Foundry also proved a perfect setting for Mrs. Grass’s delightful gardens, which were heartily enjoyed by the community.

“Mouse’s work ranges from playful to sublime,” said friend Lynn Ashe. “She kept a kaleidoscopic garden blooming indoors and out, as well as on her canvases – luminous brugmansia, glorious peonies, ad gloriosum. She also brought forth from her paintbox images of the critters who captured her heart and her imagination – her feline roommates, a stately gander, a contented pig. I will always miss her but am grateful that, though she is no longer in view, her spirit still burns bright.”

Mrs. Grass would eventually become a founding and lifelong board member of the Bedford County Arts Council. She was a vital part of the Bedford arts community, as well as an advocate for animals and the environment. Her paintings have been exhibited throughout the commonwealth.

“Knowing and being friends with Mouse was truly a fortunate experience,” said friend and fellow artist Dorothy Vensel. “Her favorite color, green, was reflected in her paintings of nature-inspired topics. She endlessly worked from a treasure chest of photos, which she photographed herself, capturing the colors and textures to perfection.”

The Museum will host the Bedford County Chamber of Commerce’s Business After Hours event on Thursday, August 23. Scheduled for 5 to 7 p.m., the event will celebrate the opening of *A Painterly Mouse: A Lifetime of Flora & Fauna*. A \$6 door fee will be charged. Seasonal hors d’oeuvres will offered, along with a cash/credit card bar. Reservations are required by August 17 by calling the Museum at (814) 589-3020.

The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Bedford is located in the historic Anderson House at 137 E. Pitt St. The Museum is open daily 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Fridays 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Museum is closed Tuesdays. Cost of admission is \$10 per person or free admission for SAMA members, ages 21 & under and 65 & older. The Museum offers free admission for Bedford residents on the first and third Wednesdays of every month. Parking is available on the street or in the lot at the rear of the building. For more information, please visit www.sama-art.org.