

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15, 2017

From: Cathy McCoy, Caldwell Arts Council
601 College Ave SW, Lenoir NC 28645
828-754-2486; info@caldwellarts.com

“CLOSE TO HOME” ART EXHIBIT AT THE CALDWELL ARTS COUNCIL

The Caldwell Arts Council is pleased to announce the art exhibit “Close to Home” featuring work by the following artists:

- photography on display by Ron Schwartz (Lenoir NC; <http://ronschwartz.smugmug.com>),
- paintings by Chad Cole (North Augusta SC; <http://www.chad-cole.com>) and
- portraits on recycled trash by Dion Hitchings (Milford NJ; <http://www.dionhitchings.com>).

The exhibit will be open to the public February 2-March 29, 2018. A meet-the-artists reception will be held February 2, 2018, 5-7pm, hosted by CCSAEOP (Caldwell County Schools Association of Educational Office Professionals). The exhibit and the reception are free and open to the public!

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Ron Schwartz – Landscapes Within Minutes of Lenoir

Ron says, “I have always had a strong connection to the outdoors and natural places. In these days where people are growing up spending much less time outdoors than each previous generation, it is important for me to extol the benefits and beauty of our natural surroundings in the hope that they will be preserved. In my photography I look for strong compositions which consist of triangles, curves, and diagonal lines that will bring out the beauty of common scenes. I attended the Maryland School of Art and Design for two years in the late 70’s.”

Chad Cole

Chad Cole is a contemporary painter whose work is inspired by the landscape, stories, and architecture of the Southern United States. His recent series of oil paintings explores the transformation of the landscape throughout Georgia, Tennessee, and the Carolinas, specifically how modern changes to agrarian life are physically manifested through the abandonment, destruction, and subsequent loss of agricultural and industrial architecture. The artist is constantly searching the backroads of the South for unique examples of Americana to use as subject matter in his paintings. Barns, textile mills, and vintage signs are a few of subjects that Chad often uses in his art work.

Great paradigm shifts in the American economy have made abandoned, overgrown architecture in the Deep South a defining feature of the rural landscape. The decline of the agrarian-based economy, the loss of manufacturing jobs in the textile industry, and the rise of Walmart have dramatically affected countless small Southern towns and farms. The impact of these forces on the economic trends within the rural populations have often led to the desertion of many interesting buildings. Across the South today, countless forsaken gas stations, stores, barns, and farmhouses in various states of decay litter the landscape along old state highways and roads. Chad is fascinated

by these nostalgic signs and symbols of the rural South, and the concepts of time, change, and culture as observed in the landscape have become important concepts in his current paintings.

Mr. Cole's work closely follows the popular tradition of barn and landscape painting, but his subject matter is rendered in a style to suggest certain qualities of the "Southern Gothic." The Southern Gothic style is characterized by grotesque, mysterious, and macabre themes within the setting and culture of the Deep South, characteristics most often identified in the twentieth century stories of William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor. Both Faulkner and O'Connor have had a profound impact on the artist's work and style, and the ideas of the Southern Gothic can be experienced through Chad's consistent use of subjects, symbols, and stories that suggest abandonment, decay, the bizarre, and a sense of being "haunted" by the history, religion, and culture of the Deep South.

Narrative and the themes of the Southern Gothic continue to be major forces on the style of the painter's work. The architectural subject matter in the artist's paintings serves as a metaphor for Southern culture and suggests the influence that Southern Gothic themes such as faith, consumption, violence, isolation, and reconstruction have on Southern consciousness. Dilapidated barns, crumbling plantations, homemade UFOs, and unique roadside vestiges are some of the "grotesque" forms frequently used by the artist in his pictures to symbolize the impact of time, history, and culture on and within the Southern landscape.

Chad Cole prepares and executes his paintings using the time-tested medium of oil on linen with a traditional color palette of earth tones. John Constable, Elliott Daingerfield, and Edward Hopper are a few of the artists whose works have had a lasting influence on Chad's technique and style. In his studio, he synthesizes wax, oil, impasto, and glazes on his canvases to achieve a distinct quality of light and atmosphere, often reminiscent of the Tonalist painters of the nineteenth century. Visual harmony is very important to the artist, and the use of a limited palette and subtle color enables the painter to create artistic effects that suggests a sublime, poetic quality of surface, depth, and tone.

"The hunt" is complimentary to the act of painting in Chad's work. The hunt refers to the artist's endless quest for interesting and inspired subject matter to use in his pictures. Rural exploration (or rurex) is the popular term used today to describe an effort to discover hidden landmarks and deserted buildings in isolated rural areas. The artist uses rural exploration as his method for discovering the inspiration for his paintings. Chad plans his "hunting" trips by studying and following the early routes of the historic roads and highways in the South. He also regularly exchanges locations and ideas for unique landscapes with an online community of like-minded rural explorers from across the region.

As most contemporary art continues to investigate ideas and globalization using non-traditional materials and techniques, Mr. Cole's modest, poetic oil paintings pay homage to a simpler, more intimate time in our country's history before "the" big box store, cable television, and air-conditioning forever altered the rural landscape of the Deep South. By combining narrative and traditional painting techniques, the artist crafts beautiful paintings that capture a distinct time and place to suggest a fleeting moment in the Southern experience.

Dion Hitchings – regarding his "Portraits on Recycled Trash"

Within my artwork I have found my own "unique world" which has no rules or boundaries. My inspirations are varied and vast, everything from dreams and Indians, nuns and demons, the Jerry

Springer Show and chickens to sins and celebrities. My world and therefore my art, is guaranteed to be colorful, self-revealing, emotional, childlike and an “eye full” to all who view it.

I purposely choose to use untraditional media. I create my works with various children’s art supplies including, crayons, magic markers, highlighters and colored pens. Using consumer boxes, discarded furniture and “trash” instead of traditional drawing surfaces has enabled me to break down pre-existing print, images, and textures while allowing the type and pictures from the recycled object to become organically part of the portrait.

During the creative process, I discovered the need to deconstruct then reconstruct the face to fit within the shape of the surface. The results are portraits that have a shattered appearance with broken and missing pieces but also form a more powerful, interesting and often disturbing viewpoint.

Portraits on Recycled Trash offers a glimpse into my own unique world, that is filled with altered and more complex viewpoints and an opportunity for the viewer to ‘Think Outside the Box.’

About the Caldwell Arts Council:

The Caldwell Arts Council’s mission is to establish and maintain an awareness and appreciation of cultural arts in Caldwell County, to encourage participation in art events, and to offer various educational opportunities and administrative services in support of artists, arts agencies, and audiences. Located at 601 College Ave SW in Lenoir, operating hours are Tuesday-Friday 9am-5pm and Saturday 10am-2pm – free to the public. For more information, call 828-754-2486 or visit www.caldwellarts.com

###

Attached photos