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UNIVERSITY MUSEUM RECEIVES MAJOR PAINTING DONATION

LAFAYETTE, LA - The Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette recently accepted the donation of major painting by one of Louisiana's most significant artists. A painting by American artist John McCrady (1911-1968) titled "Frightened Horses" c. 1934, was contributed by museum donor and UL Lafayette Alumni, George Newton, a resident of Hawaii.

John McCrady was born in Mississippi and raised rural Louisiana and Mississippi. He studied at the University of Mississippi where his father, an Episcopal minister, served on the faculty. His acclaimed painting, "Portrait of a Negro" won him a fellowship at the Art Students League in New York City. He also studied at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and the New Orleans Art School. McCrady received regional and national attention while producing public artworks for the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project and in 1939 he was honored with the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. In 1949 he received a grant from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1940, McCrady joined the Associated American Artists and he was encouraged by Caroline Durieux to experiment in lithography. Under Durieux's direction, McCrady produced four silkscreens to aid the war effort. He produced only nine lithographs in his career. In 1942 McCrady and his wife founded the McCrady Art School on Bourbon Street in the French Quarter. He found the traditions, customs and landscapes of the South, a never-ending source of inspiration. Last year, another important and widely exhibited McCrady painting achieved a record price for a work by the artist. "This is one of the most significant donations to the museum collection in recent memory and will prove to be a visitor favorite for decades to come," says Museum Director, Mark A Tullos, Jr. "UL Lafayette's museum is attracting the attention and patronage of major collectors in Louisiana and Alumni from around the country."

“Frightened Horses” now part of the University Art Museum collection is a large oil on canvas executed some time in 1934. “Frightened Horses”, can easily be described as unnerving, for the story it tells is overcast by apocalyptic shadows. At the near center of the piece, carved on a dead tree there reads the message, “Vote for Long,” in reference to Huey Pierce Long, Jr. (August 30, 1893 – September 10, 1935), the famed Louisiana politician who inspired the novel “All the Kings Men” by Robert Penn Warren.



Detail: Frightened Horses by John McCrady, (American, 1911-1968), Oil on Canvas, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. George Newton.

The painting's central characters are three horses bound in distress. They are three yet also one, as the foremost animal rears, nearly eclipsing the heads of the others. The cause of the alarm seems clearly to be an approaching storm which in a distant field has spread lightning to the ground. At first glance it is the storm, but look longer and you will see that not all the figures in the work are driven by a common influence. On the right side of the painting two children run for the house as their mother runs to meet them. Their father, a black sharecropper, is a tall heroic figure and stands between his children and the horses. He reaches toward the animals and his arms take on

a peculiar power for it becomes clear that the trees of the yard and those of the woods behind the house, and even the smoke from the chimney, all lean in the direction of his hands.



There are three more characters in the painting: a person in the far distance running away, a man closer, oddly poised beside a tree, and a third, who raises his hands high as though in frenzied supplication. It is the man at the tree who is particularly interesting because he is a shadowy figure, legs bent, one arm extended, and that arm is curiously near the origin of the lightening strike. The smoke and trees obey the hands of the father, while the bolt of lightning curves to the earth free of this form, guided perhaps by the hand of the shadowed man, who is crouched, it seems, under the force required to bring fire to the earth.



“This painting is representative of a tumultuous period in Louisiana, the depth of the American Depression,” says Tullos. “The symbolism is intriguing and in some way ironic given our present circumstances in the United States.” After minor conservation work and further research into the content of the painting the museum will present the painting during an event this spring. For more information about this painting and the Hilliard University Art Museum collection visit the museum’s web site at <http://museum.louisiana.edu>.

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The Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum in Lafayette, Louisiana is the largest art museum on the gulf coast between Houston and New Orleans, the museum features a variety of changing exhibitions, and a continuing schedule of lectures and programs. All this in the tranquil beauty of University of Louisiana, Lafayette campus and just blocks away from the Oil Center and galleries, shops and famous restaurants of downtown Lafayette.

General Information: Call 337-482-2ART, or visit museum.louisiana.edu

Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum
University of Louisiana Lafayette
710 East Saint Mary Blvd.
Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 10-5
Closed: Sunday, Monday and all major holidays