

Bird and verse on display at Michelson Museum; reception set for Thursday

Posted: Sunday, July 4, 2010 12:29 pm, Marshall News-Messenger

Terri Richardson trichardson@marshallnewsmessenger.com



Courtesy photo: An example of the art that will be on display as part of the “Birds: A Collection of Verse and Vision” display at the Michelson Museum. The exhibit opens Tuesday with a reception set for Thursday.

Anyone feeling like taking flight this summer can come imagine themselves soaring like coastal and Caddo Lake birds with a collaborative art exhibit beginning July 6, at the Michelson Museum of Art and sponsored by the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

"Birds: A Collection of Verse and Vision" featuring the works of Houston attorney and writer Jim Blackburn and Houston artist, Isabelle Scurry Chapman will be on display through Sept. 26.

During an exclusive sneak peek at the show about to be hung, Executive Director Susan Spears displayed Ms. Chapman's bird portraits painted on cigar boxes and bird sculptures made from other recycled odds and ends, buttons, lace, wire and even dryer lint.

"We're very environmentally conscious here at the museum," said Ms. Spears. "Anytime we can bring environmental issues to the public, we like to do it. Both the artist and the poet will be at the opening Thursday."

The opening reception, sponsored in part by the CLNWR, Friends of the refuge and the Caddo Lake Institute/Ramsar Wetland Center will be 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. July 8 will be open to the public.

"We are pleased to again be partnering with the Michelson Museum of Art to help sponsor conservation related exhibits," said refuge manager Mark Williams. "Many of the birds species being featured in the show can be seen at Caddo Lake. See the show, then see them in their native habitat."

Ms. Chapman's collection of bird portraits was of her favorite coastal birds, but she has included many Caddo Lake birds in the exhibit.

The birds are painted on cigar boxes, chosen because they represent a place to store treasures.

"They have lovely borders reminiscent of Indian miniature paintings," Ms. Chapman said in a statement, "I use the bird as a symbol of spirit. Birds as spirit are different for each of us. I am honored to work in collaboration of art, poetry, birds and spirit with Jim Blackburn."

In keeping with the free spirit of the feathered and flying, Ms. Chapman added that "the sculptures fit into my ethic of recycling, and mix reality and whimsy."

Blackburn is the co-founder of Houston Wilderness, the Matagorda Bay Foundation and the Galveston Bay Foundation. He's described as a serious writer who "eloquently addresses coastal preservation and sustainable development."

He considered his poetry to be a form of entertainment for himself until he visited Ms. Chapman's art room and said "I can write poems to go with those birds." And so they formed an artistic partnership.

The poems Blackburn created, allows him to express his spiritual devotion to nature, or what he refers to as "Earth Church" in ways he had only touched upon in prose. His manuscript, *The Book of Texas Bays*, was published in 2004. The Michelson exhibit is inspired by the book that he co-authored with Chapman, *Birds: A Collection of Verse and Vision*, published in 2009.

Photographs by Harrison County birder Tom Walker will also be shown with new posters created by the Caddo Lake Ramsar Wetland Education Center also on display.

"We encourage everyone to visit the show at the Michelson and then come visit us at the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Caddo Lake Wildlife Management Area or Caddo Lake State Park where over 250 species of birds are known to occur," said Williams.

Other events scheduled during the exhibit and collaboration will include a visit from noted Non-game Ornithologist Clifford Shackelford of Texas Parks and Wildlife at 5 p.m. Aug. 12. Shackelford will lecture on "How to attract and identify birds in my back yard."

Admission is always free at the Michelson Museum of Art, 216 N. Bolivar St., and is open noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

The CLNWR and Ramsar Wetland Education Center, located at 15600 Highway 134 in Karnack, Texas, is open from sun up to sun set seven days a week.

For more information about the refuge visit www.caddofriends.org or www.caddolakeinstitute.us.