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FAU Presents Exhibition on Landscape Painters A.E. Backus and Florida's Highwaymen

BOCA RATON, Fla. (July 5, 2016) – Florida Atlantic University's University Galleries presents the exhibition, "A.E. Backus and Florida's Highwaymen: History, Commerce and Art." The exhibition will be on display from Friday, Sept. 16 through Saturday, Nov. 19 in the Ritter Art Gallery, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton campus. An opening reception will take place on Thursday, Sept. 15 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and will feature a 7:00 p.m. lecture "Backus and Highwaymen Paintings: Idyllic Images and the Florida Dream" by Evan Bennett, associate professor of History, FAU. The opening reception and all associated public programs are free and open to the public.

The exhibition brings to the public new scholarly insights into the work of A.E. "Bean" Backus, Florida's preeminent landscape painter, and the Highwaymen, a group of 26 African-American artists influenced to varying degrees by Backus. The exhibition consists of a selection of original Backus works owned by FAU and a number of Backus and Highwaymen paintings borrowed from regional private collectors. Didactic wall texts, accompanied by historical photographs and artifacts, will provide viewers with the contexts for comparing the styles and themes of the paintings and for understanding how the Highwaymen emerged and commercially produced their unprecedented works of art. Specifically, the exhibition will address Backus' relation to these young artists during Jim Crow Florida in the 50s and 60s; Backus' own place in the history of Florida landscape painting; commerce and art; illusions and perceptions of the Florida landscape; and the contribution of these landscape paintings to the Florida Dream.

A series of public programs will take place in the Ritter Art Gallery while the exhibition is on display. Lectures by Florida-based humanities scholars will analyze the social, historical and political

milieu of these artists. Also, a panel of several contemporary African-American visual artists will critically examine and offer fresh perspectives on the content, stylistic renderings and aesthetics of these paintings.

Upcoming lectures and programs in the series include: “Documenting 20 Years of Researching the Highwaymen” on Thursday, September 29, at 7 p.m. by Gary Monroe, a professor at Daytona State College who has authored four books on the Highwaymen artists. On Saturday, September 24 at 2 p.m. a Gallery Talk will be presented by FAU associate professor of Anthropology Arlene Fradkin in association with a Family Art Day presented by the University Galleries Museum Education Program occurring from 1 to 4 p.m. that day. On Thursday, October 6 at 7 p.m. Dr. Tameka Bradley Hobbs, assistant professor, Florida Memorial University will give a lecture entitled “Historical and Social Contexts of Backus/Highwaymen Narrative in Mid-20th Century Jim Crow Florida.”

The University Galleries’ Ritter Art Gallery at FAU is open Tuesday through Friday from 1 to 4 p.m., and Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m. Visitors must obtain a \$2 parking pass or use the limited metered parking before visiting the gallery. More extensive parking directions are available online at www.fau.edu/galleries. The University Galleries operate an active Museum Education Program that is approved as a Field Experience Provider by the School District of Palm Beach County. Class and other group tours can be arranged during and outside of open hours by appointment. For more information, visit www.fau.edu/galleries or call 561- 297-2661.

Funding for this program was provided through a grant from the Florida Humanities Council with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of the Florida Humanities Council or the National Endowment for the Humanities. This project was also funded, in part, by Florida Atlantic University’s Departments of Visual Arts & Art History, Anthropology, and History; the Division of Student Affairs; and private contributors: The Ritter Foundation, the Kelly Foundation and HaitianArt.com.

-FAU-

About Florida Atlantic University:

Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University, with an annual economic impact of \$6.3 billion, serves more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students at sites throughout its six-county service region in southeast Florida. FAU’s world-class teaching and research faculty serves students through 10 colleges: the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, the College of Business, the College for Design and Social Inquiry, the College of Education, the College of Engineering and Computer Science, the Graduate College, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. FAU is ranked as a High Research Activity institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The University is placing special focus on the rapid development of three signature themes – marine and coastal issues, biotechnology and contemporary societal challenges – which provide opportunities for faculty and students to build upon FAU’s existing strengths in research and scholarship. For more information, visit www.fau.edu.

A.E. Backus and Florida's Highwaymen: History, Commerce and Art

Ritter Art Gallery
September 15 - November 19, 2016

For high resolution images contact:
Courtney Justin, cjustin2014@fau.edu

A.E. Backus

(1906 - 1990)

Bream Fishing

oil on canvas

20 x 24 inches

Florida Atlantic University Foundation collection

Gift of Thomas F. Fleming, Jr.

High Resolution image available upon request



A.E. Backus

(1906 - 1990)

Lighter Pine

oil on canvas

25 x 30 inches

Florida Atlantic University Foundation collection

Gift of Thomas F. Fleming, Jr.

High Resolution image available upon request



A.E. Backus

(1906 - 1990)

Still Water

oil on canvas

25 x 30 inches

Florida Atlantic University Foundation collection

Gift of Thomas F. Fleming, Jr.

High Resolution image available upon request



A.E. Backus

(1906 - 1990)

Boca Bridge

oil on canvas

24 x 30 inches

Florida Atlantic University Foundation collection

Gift of Thomas F. Fleming, Jr.

High Resolution image available upon request



A.E. Backus and Florida's Highwaymen: History, Commerce and Art

Ritter Art Gallery
September 15 - November 19, 2016

A.E. Backus

(1906 - 1990)

Stormy, 1947

oil on canvas

25 x 30 inches

Courtesy Scott Schlesinger Collection



Alfred Hair

(1941 - 1970)

Spring on the Saint Lucie

oil on upson board

24 x 36 inches

Courtesy Scott Schlesinger Collection



Harold Newton

(1934 - 1994)

Pink Cloud Landscape

oil on upson board

28 x 36 inches

Courtesy Scott Schlesinger Collection

High Resolution image available upon request



Livingston Roberts

(1941 - 2004)

Riverhouse Sunrise

oil on upson board

24 x 36 inches

Private Collection

High Resolution image available upon request



A.E. Backus and Florida's Highwaymen: History, Commerce and Art

Ritter Art Gallery
September 15 - November 19, 2016

Al Black

(b. 1947)

Pastel Sunrise
oil on canvas
16 x 20 inches
Private Collection

High Resolution image available upon request



Willie Daniels

(b. 1950)

Turbulent Backcountry
oil on upson board
24 x 36 inches
Private Collection

High Resolution image available upon request



James Gibson

(b. 1938)

Moonlight Indian River Palms
oil on upson board
24 x 48 inches
Private Collection

High Resolution image available upon request



R. A. "Roy" McLendon

(b. 1932)

Savanna Sunset
oil on upson board
24 x 36 inches
Private Collection

High Resolution image available upon request



**A.E. Backus and Florida's Highwaymen:
History, Commerce and Art**

Ritter Art Gallery
September 15 - November 19, 2016

Mary Ann Carroll

(b. 1940)

Flame Tree, 1968

oil on upson board

24 x 36 inches

Courtesy Scott Schlesinger Collection



A.E. Backus & Florida's Highwaymen: History, Commerce & Art

Ritter Art Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton

September 15 – November 19, 2016

Public Programs September 15 – November 17, 2016

Exhibition Opening: Thursday, September 15, 6:30 – 9 P.M.

- A. *Date:* Thursday, September 15, 2016 *Time:* 7 to 8 P.M.
Location: FAU University Galleries – Ritter Art Gallery
Speaker(s): Dr. Evan Bennett (humanities scholar)
Format: Lecture – (part of the exhibition opening)
Topic: Backus and Highwaymen Paintings: Idyllic Images and the Florida Dream
- B. *Date:* Thursday, September 29, 2016 *Time:* 7 to 8 P.M.
Location: FAU University Galleries – Ritter Art Gallery
Speaker(s): Gary Monroe (humanities scholar)
Format: Lecture
Topic: Documenting 20 Years of Researching the Highwaymen
Format: Gallery Talk
- C. *Date:* Saturday, September 24, 2016 *Time:* 2 to 3 P.M.
Location: FAU University Galleries – Ritter Art Gallery
Speaker(s): Dr. Arlene Fradkin (humanities scholar)
Format: Gallery Talk
Topic: Exhibition Themes
Related Event: Family Art Day 1 – 4 P.M.
- D. *Date:* Thursday, October 6, 2016 *Time:* 7 to 8 P.M.
Location: FAU University Galleries – Ritter Art Gallery
Speaker(s): Dr. Tameka Bradley Hobbs (humanities scholar)
Format: Lecture
Topic: Historical and Social Contexts of Backus/Highwaymen Narrative in Mid-20th Century Jim Crow Florida
- E. *Date:* Thursday, October 20, 2016 *Time:* 7 to 8 P.M.
Location: FAU University Galleries – Ritter Art Gallery
Speaker(s): Dr. Julian Chambliss (humanities scholar)
Format: Lecture
Topic: Race and Mediation: Culture, Identity & Escape in Florida

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A.E. Backus & Florida's Highwaymen: History, Commerce & Art

Ritter Art Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton

September 15 – November 19, 2016

- F. *Date:* Thursday, November 3, 2016 *Time:* 7 to 9 P.M.
Location: FAU University Galleries – Ritter Art Gallery
Speaker(s): Mallory O'Connor (moderator), Onajide Shabaka (discussant),
Adler Guerrier (discussant), Khaulah Nuruddin (discussant) –
all humanities scholars
Format: Panel Discussion
Topic: Introduction on history of Florida landscape painting by moderator
followed by 3 visual artists as panel discussants on the content,
stylistic renderings, and aesthetics of Backus and Highwaymen
paintings from perspective
- G. *Date:* Thursday, November 10, 2016 *Time:* 7 to 8 P.M.
Location: FAU University Galleries – Ritter Art Gallery
Speaker(s): Dr. Michael D. Harris (humanities scholar)
Format: Lecture
Topic: Race and Visual Representation vis-à-vis the Highwaymen
- H. *Date:* Thursday, November 17, 2016 *Time:* 7 to 8 P.M.
Location: FAU University Galleries – Ritter Art Gallery
Speaker(s): Dr. Natasha Kuzmanovic (humanities scholar)
Format: Lecture
Topic: A.E. Backus: Style and Patronage

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE See:

Speakers and Project Contributors Titles and Bios, a separate attached document

A.E. Backus & Florida's Highwaymen: History, Commerce & Art

Ritter Art Gallery, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton

September 15 – November 19, 2016

Speakers and Project Contributors Titles and Bios

Project Contributors

1. *Arlene Fradkin*, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, FAU, is an environmental archaeologist and has developed and curated exhibitions on early Native American cultures and American natural history.
2. *Brian McConnell*, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Dept. of Visual Arts & Art History, FAU, is an art historian and classical archaeologist with research interests in landscape painting. He recently published a book on landscape painter Thomas Cole.
3. *Evan Bennett*, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Dept. of History, FAU, specializes in Florida modern and environmental history and Southeast agricultural labor and federal policy.
4. *W. Rod Faulds*, MA, Director, University Galleries, FAU, is a veteran museum administrator, exhibition designer, and educator.

Project Curatorial Consultants/Humanities Scholars

1. *Gary Monroe*, MFA, Professor of Visual Art, Daytona State College, is a documentary photographer and Florida's Highwaymen expert, having authored four books and given numerous public lectures on these painters.
2. *Michael D. Harris*, Ph.D. & MFA, Associate Professor of Art History, Dept. of African American Studies, Emory University, is an expert on race and visual representation and has curated many exhibitions of leading contemporary African-American artists.

Project Humanities Scholars: Public Lectures & Panel Discussion

1. *Tameka Bradley Hobbs*, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of History, Florida Memorial University, specializes in 20th-century African-American racial segregation and violence in Florida.
2. *Julian Chambliss*, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History, Rollins College, focuses his research on 20th-century African-American experience in Florida, urban development and history, race and ethnicity, and Florida as a "mediated" state.
3. *Mallory O'Connor*, MA/MFA (American History/Art History), Professor Emerita of Art History, Santa Fe State College, Gainesville, has developed and curated numerous Florida art and history exhibitions.
4. *Onajide Shabaka*, MFA, Visual Artist, based in Ft. Lauderdale, is a multimedia artist, documentary photographer and curator of numerous exhibitions.
5. *Adler Guerrier*, BFA, Visual Artist, based in Miami, is a multimedia visual artist, national recognized for his inclusion in the Whitney Museum of American Art's biennial exhibition and a solo exhibition at the Pérez Art Museum Miami.
6. *Khaulah Nuruddin*, MFA, is a visual artist and is currently Museum Education Coordinator, University Galleries, FAU.
7. *Natasha Kuzmanović*, Ph.D., is an art historian and conservator whose forthcoming book, "Tropical Light: The Art of A.E. Backus," is scheduled to be published November 2016.