

Walter Anderson Museum of Art

by

The Walter Anderson Museum of Art
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The Walter Anderson Museum of Art (W.A.M.A), opened in 1991 in historic downtown Ocean Springs, is one of the most beautiful and unique museums in the country. It is dedicated to the celebration of the interdisciplinary works of Walter Inglis Anderson (1903 - 1965), American master artist, whose depictions of the plants, animals, and people of the Gulf Coast have placed him among the forefront of American painters of the 20th century. Anderson's watercolors, drawings, oils, block prints, ceramics, and carvings are all represented in the museum's permanent collection, while diverse changing exhibitions, many featuring the work of other significant artist, occur throughout the year.

WAMA Special Programs

As part of WAMA's mission to provide exciting cultural opportunities to our community, the museum hosts many concerts, lectures, workshops, gallery walks, films, and other innovative and educational programs for the public. Our varied educational programming is presented to reinforce the incredible interdisciplinary quality of Anderson's work. Find out what's going on now by visiting the WAMA official site..

WAMA Membership

We invite you to Join the Walter Anderson Museum of Art. As a member of our museum family, you will enjoy free admission, invitations to opening receptions and member parties, our quarterly newsletter Motif, discounts in the Museum Store, and more. Call today for a membership brochure.

The Museum Store

Stop by the Museum Store and explore the Walter Anderson prints, note cards, and books, along with jewelry, T-shirts, unique gifts, art books, and children's educational toys. Checks, Mastercard and Visa accepted.

About Walter Inglis Anderson

Walter Inglis Anderson was born in 1903 in New Orleans to George Walter Anderson, a grain merchant, and Annette McConnell Anderson, an artist. His mother's love of art, music, and literature strongly influenced Walter (called "Bob" by his friends and family) and his two brothers, Peter and Mac. Anderson was educated at a private boarding school, then attended the Parsons Institute of Design in New York and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where his drawings earned him a scholarship for study abroad. He toured through out Europe and was particularly impressed with the cave art he saw at Les Eyzies in France. His wide-ranging interests included extensive reading of poetry, history, natural science and art history. He pursued man's search for meaning in books of folklore, mythology, religious philosophy, and epics of voyage and discovery. Anderson returned to Ocean Springs and married a Radcliffe graduate, Agnes (Sissy) Grinstead, started a family, and went to work creating molds and decorating earthenware at Shearwater Pottery, founded by his brother Peter.

Anderson felt that an artist should create affordable work that brought pleasure to others, and in return, the artist should be able to pursue his artistic passions. In the 1930's, he worked on regional Works Progress Administration mural projects and began to view his role in art as a muralist. It was in the late 1930's that Anderson first succumbed to mental illness. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia and spent three years in and out of hospitals. Following his hospitalizations, Anderson joined his wife and small children at her father's antebellum home in Gautier, Mississippi. The pastoral tranquility of the "Oldfields" plantation provided an ideal setting for recuperation. During this period, the duality in his personality emerged in his art and writings. On one hand, his psyche drove him to compulsively render hundreds of images, and on the other, his intellect and training fashioned disciplined and compelling works of art which reflected his extraordinary grasp of the history of art. In 1947, with the understanding of his family, Anderson left his wife and children and embarked on a private and very solitary existence. He lived alone in a cottage on the Shearwater compound, and began his trips to Horn Island, one of a group of barrier islands along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. He would row the

12 miles in a small skiff, carrying minimal necessities and his art supplies. Anderson spent long periods of time on the uninhabited island of the last 18 years of his life. There he lived primitively, working in the open and sleeping under his boat, sometimes for weeks at a time. He endured extreme weather conditions, from blistering summers to hurricane winds and freezing winter spells. He painted and drew a multitude of species of island vegetation, animal and insect, penetrating the wild thickets on hands and knees and lying in lagoons in his search to render in explicit detail his island paradise. Anderson's obsession to "realize" his subjects through his art, to be one with the natural world instead of an intruder, created works that are intense and evocative. Much of the work survived only by chance; it was discovered in drifts, like autumn leaves, throughout his cottage after his death. Those found treasures present the viewer today with a fascinating opportunity to speculate about this artist and his private world view.

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