



# **Melissa Tubbs: Drawing Alabama's History**

## *An Alabama Bicentennial Commissioned Commemorative Project*

**January 7 - March 22, 2019**

This exhibition entitled "Celebration & Preservation" is an Alabama Bicentennial Commission Commemorative Project celebrating two centuries of Alabama's architectural history. Twenty-five pen-and-ink drawings of buildings from throughout the state have been created by Tubbs for a traveling exhibition which will be shown at six venues. The work has already traveled to Auburn University and the Gadsden Museum of Art. It will travel to the Tuscaloosa Arts Council, the Mobile

Alabama's architecture ranges from characteristic folk houses to structures typical of fashionable tastes of their day. They represent architectural styles such as Victorian Gothic, Georgian, Greek and Roman Revival, Romanesque Revival, Byzantine Revival, Usonian, Art Moderne, and Mid-Century Modern. Tubbs has created finely-detailed drawings of the buildings that have played a part in the state's history. "The works of "Celebration & Preservation" are accurate and beautiful representations of structures that endure, which makes the exhibition a testimony to what has been preserved," says Jay Lamar, Executive Director of the Alabama Bicentennial Commission. "It is also a powerful statement about the value of preservation itself. "Celebration & Preservation" encourages viewers to see our architectural treasures with fresh appreciation. It will also inspire us to preserve them for the future."

Tubbs has traveled the state photographing the buildings she selected to draw, as well as gathering their histories and facts for a 32-page catalog accompanying the exhibition. The drawings depict homes and businesses from 1820, one year after statehood, through 1997 with a project from the Rural Studio run by Auburn University.

Melissa Tubbs is an architectural portraitist. She earned a bachelor's degree in visual design from Auburn University and began a career in commercial design, and raised a family. After 20 years of designing magazines and creating drawings and pastels on her own time, in the mid-1990s she was offered commissions that would dramatically alter her career and her approach toward art. One such commission was by a local law firm who commissioned Tubbs to document every courthouse in Montgomery and surrounding counties.

Tubbs soon came to the realization that this new subject engaged her interest and passion for architecture and made better use of her finely honed technical abilities. In addition to numerous commissions, Tubbs used her pen to document significant works of architecture and the decorative ornaments on those structures. Indeed, some of the artist's finest works are of building details, focusing on architectural embellishments, different textures of building materials, and the dramatic patterns of light and shadow cascading across the surfaces of the structure.

Pen and ink drawings require careful preparation, concentration, intensity, and error free execution. Tubbs' process begins with a camera and a zoom lens. She takes several photographs of the overall subject, and detail photographs at different exposures to document information in the area of sunlight and shadow. The basic design is sketched on paper with a graphite pencil. Concentrating on one small section at a time, she builds up layers of ink and depth through a combination of hatched and crosshatched marks until the subject is adequately defined. After all areas have been worked, she reinforces overall shadow patterns to pull all the individual areas together into a unified drawing.

For the last two dozen years, Tubbs has been a full-time artist, architectural preservationist, and community arts enthusiast. She was commissioned by the Montgomery Area Business Committee for the Arts to create drawings as awards given to outstanding business supporters of the arts. The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts commissioned a series of eight drawings of its interior and exterior, and a few years later asked her to document a new building addition. Strathmore Artist Papers commissioned a drawing for their Series 400 Smooth Surface drawing pad covers. Melissa B. Tubbs has been recognized through numerous commissions, dozens of publications, and inclusion in a variety of exhibitions from Montgomery to New York.

The exhibit is on display in the Georgine Clarke Alabama Artists Gallery through March 22, 2019. The gallery is operated by the Alabama State Council on the Arts and is free and open to the public Monday-Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. The gallery is located on the first floor of the RSA Tower, located in downtown Montgomery at 201 Monroe Street.

For Additional information, please contact: Amy Williamson at (334) 242-5150 or by email at [amy.williamson@arts.alabama.gov](mailto:amy.williamson@arts.alabama.gov)