

# FLUXUS AND FOLK: Mike Howard & Buddy Snipes

*July 24, 2009 - September 4, 2009*



The Alabama State Council on the Arts is proud to showcase the work of Alabama artists in its gallery in the RSA Tower. Hours are Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m. The current exhibition features works by two artists from east Alabama and compares the art approaches each represents.

Mike Howard grew up in Phenix City, Alabama. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps, attended the University of Georgia, moved to New York City to participate in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program and received an MFA from Rutgers University in 1974. A group of artists connected through Rutgers were proponents of the Fluxus artistic philosophy. This approach should be viewed as an “attitude”, not as a movement or style. Work is simple, often marked with performance, open to accidents and other unintended effects. Connections are made between everyday, found objects and art. Humor is always an important element. As an example of the philosophy, Howard staged a project at the well-known Gracie Mansion Gallery in New York entitled “Win a Trip to Paris Sweepstakes.” A group of identical paintings of airplanes were presented, numbered, sold, and then used as “raffle tickets”, with a spinning carnival wheel awarding two airline tickets to Paris as well as other prizes.



The paintings in this exhibition take on the local artist attitude, not the “attitude” of high art. Howard notes, “Some of the places that I have selected to paint were obviously UGLY/PLAIN places in the eye of “sophisticated people.” Coordinated with the exhibition, and an example of the performance aspect of Fluxus, is the creation of a billboard located in Columbus, Georgia. It features three paintings from the exhibition and the statement PHENIX CITY IS PRETTIER THAN COLUMBUS. We'll see.

Mike Howard returns regularly to a house he purchased in Hurtsboro and designated MOP, Museum of Ordinary People. In Hurtsboro he met Buddy Snipes, who is known as a contemporary folk artist, a self-taught artist. The similarities between Fluxus and Folk attitudes became apparent. Both use simplicity, found objects and wit. Both are approachable, depicting the familiar, the understandable. In this exhibition, constructions by Buddy Snipes depict animals and architecture he knows in his area of East Alabama. Vignettes tell his stories of the people he knows—his neighbors.



The collaborative pieces bring an interface between the two philosophies. A series of cow paintings by Mike Howard are framed by Buddy Snipes with twigs. A Baby Walker is a witty statement of tin images attached to an antique object, telling the story of everyday use and community—the people, animals—and an angel surrounding the young child, but rendering the object unusable.