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CONTACT: Mary Catherine Brooks

marycatherinedavis@yahoo.com

**GAC HOSTS BLUES WEEK ART EXHIBIT FEATURING**

**BLUES-INSPIRED DELTA ARTISTS**

**CHURCH GOIN’ MULE, RICKY FERGUSON, D.KOSMO + JENNIFER WILDER KOSMO, STAN STREET, AND JOEY YOUNG**

***Featuring Live Music at the Preview Party by Local Leland Legend, Pat Thomas***

The Greenville Arts Council (GAC) Board of Directors is thrilled to announce the artist lineup for the 2022 Blues Week exhibit. The public is invited to join us Thursday, September 15 from 5 pm until 7 pm for the opening reception of *Hearts Like Railroad Steel*, a group exhibit by some of the Delta’s most well-known culture-inspired artists. The opening will feature works from Church Goin’ Mule, Ricky Ferguson, D.Kosmo and Jennifer Wilder Kosmo, Stan Street, and Joey Young. The event is to be held in the Roger D. Malkin Gallery at the E.E. Bass Cultural Arts Center in historic downtown Greenville, MS and is sponsored by the Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau as well as Mississippi Arts Commission and Mitchell Distributing.

Because these artists' works are in high demand, a special ticketed preview pre-sale event will be held Wednesday, September 14 from 5-7 pm in the Malkin Gallery, featuring live music from blues legend Pat Thomas from Leland. Greenville Arts Council members will have the advanced opportunity to purchase tickets on Wednesday, September 7. Tickets for non-members can be purchased beginning September 8. Tickets are $50 each and can be purchased on our website ([www.greenville-arts-council.com](http://www.greenville-arts-council.com)) or you can find the link on our Facebook page. Patrons can also call the GAC office at 662-332-2246 to pay over the phone using a credit or debit card. This event allows exclusive access to the gallery and one-on-one time with the artists and includes a complimentary bar. In order to respect the integrity of the event, seating will be limited, so we encourage anyone interested to be prepared to purchase tickets as soon as they go on sale.

**About the Exhibit:**

*Hearts Like Railroad Steel* is a group exhibition intended to recognize the life and times that brought the blues to the world. It took strong hearts and unbendable minds to create heartache and haunting music that is both timeless and deeply personal – Howlin’ Wolf said no one can sing someone else's song, because everyone has a different life experience. This show hopes to capture the many faces, interpretations, and celebrations of the blues that we hope will continue onward for a long time.

**About the Artists:**

**Church Goin’ Mule**

Church Goin Mule is a southern outsider artist who keeps her studio in Cleveland, Mississippi. Mule's work is made with the purpose of bringing hope to a worried world, in the way blues music has eased burdens for decades. Her work in this show is a celebration of the blues musicians she has idolized for her whole life, and a form of tribute to the music and the souls that brought her to the Delta since 2014. She is grateful to now call the Delta home and to continue to honor the legacy that folks like Charley Patton, Son House, Memphis Minnie, Bessie Smith, and Robert Johnson left behind. The work is inspired by blues stories, lyrics, and dreams, all translated through the mule, who witnessed the rise and fall of the blues in his own lifetime.

**Ricky Ferguson**

Ricky Ferguson is best known for his public murals in South Greenwood at places such as Iola’s Fast Food on Walthall Street and Club Whispers. Local organizations such as Main Street Greenwood and Art Place have featured his work over the years. His main inspiration and drive for creating art comes from music. A Greenwood native, Ferguson alternates his days working as a laborer and as an artist, and can often be found in downtown Greenwood.

**Kosmo**

Doug Kosmo was born in Houston, Texas in 1971. He spent his early years making art, hunting for Indian artifacts, and making music. He graduated in 1991 with a Graphic Design degree and moved to Mexico painting murals for nightclubs. During this time, he traveled throughout the country falling in love with the people and its rich cultural history. After returning from Mexico, Kosmo moved to Miami, Florida working as a designer for a streetwear clothing label. During this time, Kosmo participated in art exhibitions, garnered media attention, and began building a new and diverse audience. Kosmo’s work is collected nationally and internationally and continues to gain popularity both as a visual artist and musician. Kosmo currently lives and works out of his studio in Clarksdale, Mississippi.

**Stan Street**

Cajun chefs, bluesmen and red-haired women people the art of Stan Street. On his canvas, New Orleans’s Delta and Florida’s Big Cypress Swamp blend into a stew of red hot licks and blazing notes. It was only after years as a recognized blues musician in Florida that he took up brush and paint. Street’s earliest art celebrated the blues pioneers in wide slashes of brilliant color on slabs of discarded wood, rescued from anonymity with portraits of the likes of Muddy Waters, Elmore James, Robert Johnson. After some time in New Orleans, the juke joints and blues festivals of the deep South started to breathe on his canvas. As he experimented with different styles, drawing on the Impressionists and Expressionists, Street “took what he needed to know and went from there”. Bold strokes and colors played out the sounds he heard and played as a musical artist. “Being self-taught is an advantage, in that doors are always open for new development. My art will always have a primitive feel to it and I try to give it movement and life.”

The biggest influence on Street’s art is the perspective of being a blues musician. Growing up in New York he was influenced by his father and uncle – classical percussionists – who encouraged his creativity. He took up: sax, harmonica, percussion and singing, accumulating credits in award winning blues groups. He tours the Canadian blues festival circuit as well as blues festivals and honkytonks of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia. Although Street called Florida his “home” for more than 25 years, he has moved to Clarksdale, Mississippi, where he finds common ground with the primordial blues of the Delta, and also will be closer to New Orleans, Chicago, and Kansas City.

Putting the music in his head and the vision of his travels onto canvas are as natural as blowin’ a slow, low, blue note through his well-worked sax. Street readily acknowledges one art form supports the other and that his art work and his music are works in progress. Leaving open the question “ does the music support the art or does the art support the music?” To the fans of Stan Street, that is a question that hopefully is never answered!

*– Linda-Lou Nelson, founder South Florida Blues Society*

**Joey Young**

Joey Young is a potter and painter from the Mississippi Delta; his work exhibits regional influences shaped by the complicated coexistence of cultures steeped in blues music, agriculture, and religion. Young's creations include functional pottery, raw landscapes rooted in pastoral

realism, and expressionistic figures portraying universal and regional alienation.

After meeting ‘Mule’ (Marshall Blevins) at a Malkin Gallery event and bumping into her several more times in the art community, GAC Exhibit Coordinator Mary Catherine Brooks invited Mule to exhibit with GAC. “I first came across Church Goin’ Mule on Instagram and instantly was drawn to the work,” says Brooks. “After scrolling her social media and seeing her name popping up in features and interviews in local publications, I knew I had to meet this artist and get her in our gallery. If you’ve not had the pleasure of meeting Marshall, her personality is just as magnetizing as her work.”

“When I approached Marshall about being the featured artist for the Blues Week exhibit for 2022, she did not hesitate to accept the offer and suggested the idea of a large group exhibit featuring other artists from different areas of the Delta whose work is similar in style and inspiration,” continued Brooks. Brooks and Blevins along with the GAC Board of Directors have been working together over the last few months to finalize details of the exhibit and a new event, a preview party.

“Church Goin’ Mule is having her moment in the art world,” commented Elisabeth Steele, President of GAC. “We were thrilled to hear Mary Catherine had secured her on our gallery schedule, but when Marshall reached out to these other artists and began curating a whole cultural arts event based around the blues, our leadership jumped into action to make sure our artists and patrons get the most they can out of this experience, which includes a special ticketed preview party where patrons will have an advanced opportunity to purchase works.”

While patrons are visiting Bass on Thursday for the opening reception of the event, there will also be two other Blues Week related events happening the GAC Board encourages everyone to attend: “Chitlin’ Circuit Exhibit” and “Pine Bluff to Greenville”. The Delta Rhythm and Bayous Alliance, in conjunction with the 45th Annual Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival, are hosting both events. The “Chitlin’ Circuit Exhibit” is a week-long art exhibit that will hang at E.E. Bass Cultural Arts Center from September 12 thru September 17. Also, the evening of the 15th, there will be a forum held in Jake and Freda Stein Hall beginning at 6pm, “Pine Bluff to Greenville”. Jimmy Cunningham, Jr. of Pine Bluff, Arkansas will lead the dialogue and special guest Transportation Commissioner Willie Simmons will give an update on the status of the Blues Highway (MS-16). A Grammy winning Blues Artist is also expected to make an appearance. We encourage public officials, community leaders and the public to attend these free events.

Hearts Like Railroad Steel will remain on display through Friday, October 28, 2022. The Malkin Gallery is open weekdays (M-F) during GAC office operating hours (8-5) or by appointment, but we encourage visitors to call ahead to plan a visit due to limited staff and previously planned events in the space. Works of art will be for sale, and a portion of the proceeds helps support GAC operations. This project is supported in part by funding from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

The Greenville Arts Council’s mission is to promote the rich cultural heritage of the region and stimulate and encourage cultural activities, arts appreciation, arts education, and the creative works of artists. The E.E. Bass Foundation works diligently to build a strong vibrant community by providing a space for a variety of cultural events, ranging from community theatre to art exhibits and lectures. GAC was founded in 1983 and serves as a community hub for all arts-related activities from theater and dance to music, visual and literary arts. For more information about GAC or how to become a member to support the arts in Washington County, visit [www.greenville-arts-council.com](http://www.greenville-arts-council.com), call 662-332-2246, or check us out on Facebook and Instagram.