

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gulf Coast Museum of Art
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A Mysterious Clarity at Gulf Coast Museum of Art

April 15, 2008, Largo, FL – Offering three distinct views of the Florida landscape, *A Mysterious Clarity* features the work of Mark Messersmith, Lillian Garcia-Roig and Ray Burggraf, who share the distinction of being on the Fine Arts faculty at Florida State University. These artists explore the same subject matter but rely on their own aesthetic system to interpret the ever-changing Florida landscape.

The exhibition will run from May 17 through July 27, with an opening reception scheduled for Friday, May 16 at 7:00p.m. This reception will also offer an *Artist Talk* in the GCMA Auditorium beginning at 6:30p.m. More information can be found on the GCMA website at www.gulfcoastmuseum.org.

RSVP for this event by phone at (727) 518-6833 x207 or via email at psriram@gulfcoastmuseum.org

This exhibition was organized by the Gulf Coast Museum of Art and is sponsored by the Fine Arts Society.

Representative images are available upon request.

Show Synopsis & Bios:

A Mysterious Clarity is an exhibition about nature. Featuring the paintings of three artists who live and work in Florida, *A Mysterious Clarity* explores a range of impressions inspired by the complexities of our natural environment. We are taken to landscapes of solace and beauty, ferocity and destruction. Our expectations of how nature should appear in representation are challenged. Recognizable shapes melt into abstraction. Abstractions somehow begin to take form. Ray Burggraf, Mark Messersmith, and Lillian Garcia-Roig each came to Florida to teach painting in the art department at Florida State University in Tallahassee and for each the subject of the Florida landscape has since become central to their work. Their approaches—both in their aesthetics and in their process—however, differ radically. When exhibited together, the works of Burggraf, Messersmith and Garcia-Roig, though so outwardly diverse, begin to interact. Colors and shapes intermingle, drawing the viewer from one painting to another. New patterns and textures begin to emerge. The result is, as the artists' have termed it, "A Mysterious Clarity", where we can begin to see beyond the limits of our own expectations.

Ray Burggraf arrived at Florida State University in 1970 from California, where he earned his MA and MFA from the University of California, Berkeley. In his nearly sculptural paintings, which he creates on wood boards he shapes into biomorphic forms, the landscape emerges as an underlying theme. Yet the landscapes are abstractions, impressions of color applied in graduated layers with seamless precision to the surface geometries of his wood forms. Yet in spite of the seemingly obscure relationship between the landscape and its representation in his work, nature's essential elements remain visible. Burggraf's structures are suggestive of forms found in nature, his colors remind us of atmospheric light—but do not mimic them.

Mark Messersmith began teaching at Florida State in 1985, having earned his MFA at the University of Indiana in Bloomington. In Messersmith's vision virile beasts engage in struggles to the death, majestic birds feast amidst murky swamps, gators writhe between cypress roots, and all the while the threat of human encroachment looms darkly. The already precarious balances of these unstable environments begin to unfold.

Lillian Garcia-Roig came to Florida State in 2001 from University of Texas, Austin where she was a tenured professor. She earned her MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1990. Her majestic, large-scale canvases painted on site in the forest, feature massive tree trunks, foliage in all shade of green, and dense weaves of branches. Up close, however, her compositions dissolve into surface detail. The woods are abstracted into brilliant patterns and shapes that engage the viewer on the canvas's surface as intensely as the painting's subject matter.

Museum Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00 – 4:00 p.m.; Sunday, 12:00 – 4:00 p.m.; closed Monday

Regular admission prices: \$8.00 adults; \$7.00 seniors (65 & older), \$4.00 college students with valid identification; youth (age 7-18) \$4; children 6 and younger and museum members are free.

Admission subject to change for special exhibitions and events.

The GCMA, a non-profit organization, is accredited by the American Association of Museums and is supported in part by GCMA members, the Fine Arts Society, and the Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs through the Florida Arts Council. The GCMA is located adjacent to the Pinellas County Extension, Florida Botanical Gardens, Heritage Village, and the Pinellas County Historical Museum.