

30 YEARS

Three Decades of New Art at
Second Street Gallery

Realism is directly questioned in contemporary photography, which had a surge of self-consciousness in the late 1970s that continues today. The range of photographic expression is fully realized in *30 Years* because the media has been well represented in Second Street's history, in keeping with the region's strong photographic tradition (in part documented by Susan Moldenhauer's 1988 exhibition *In Pursuit of the Human Spirit: Photographs of the South*). Human/social documentation, landscape, wildlife, constructed, as well as the current trend of revisiting 19th-century techniques (Alyssa Salomon, Willie Anne Wright)—all have had an important place in past programming. Three current or former staff photographers from the National Geographic Society are included in the group (Sam Abell, William Allard, Michael Nichols), as is Virginia native Sally Mann, whose recent effulgent Deep South landscapes are brooding homages to her roots.

The sculptural selections reflect a recent trend towards more conceptual approaches to three dimensions (found-object, contemporary craft, site-installation, interactive computer, new technologies). The past 30 years has seen an explosion in the area of sculpture with respect to materials: some peel away rubber drapery block to manipulate light and shadow (Judith Leemann), find gender commentary in male/female snap parts (Les Christensen), or in the case of Craig Pleasants and Stephen Keene, embrace consumerism through repetition in installation, be they shoes or a hip two-person pop band. Barbara MacCallum continues her multimedia exploration of science and the body, while the body for Sonya Clark and Joyce Scott's beadwork is either loving or humorously sexualized.

Over Second Street's tenure the lines between painting, sculpture, and photography blurred. Todd Murphy's use of Plexiglas, photography, and painting exemplifies this attitude, as do Anne Slaughter's lead writings on canvas and Buzz Spector's approach to material (using everything from found books and site collage to large-scale Polaroids). Collage, assemblage, ceramic, intaglio, digital art, drawing: these diverse material tactics are all found in *30 Years*, just the tip of the iceberg. In terms of the variety of work Second Street has shared with this region.

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