



NEWS RELEASE

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Canton Museum of Art Announces Opening of Spring Exhibits, Including Featured Exhibit, *Mort Künstler: "The Godfather" of Pulp Fiction Illustrators*

**"Nobody captured hard-boiled action better than Mort Künstler.
His full-throttle, action-packed, in-your-face
images represent the very essence of the pulp era."**

- Michael W. Schantz, Former Director, The Heckscher Museum of Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Canton, OH): March 31, 2021 – The Canton Museum of Art (CMA) welcomes in Spring during its 85th Anniversary Season with the featured exhibition *Mort Künstler: "The Godfather" of Pulp Fiction Illustrators*, featuring work of one of the most prolific illustrators of the twentieth century, organized by The Heckscher Museum of Art and toured by International Arts & Artists, Washington D.C., *Pulp Fiction* will be on view at CMA beginning April 10 through July 3, 2021. Three additional original exhibitions – *We've Got Issues: Myra Schuetter Watercolors, Tomorrow...An Unknown Quantity: The Work of Lee Kessler*, and *Collection Gems: Celebrating 85 Years of CMA* – will also be on view.

While the Museum's galleries will be open for regular hours, with time-ticketed advance reservations, a virtual "opening" via Facebook Live is anticipated for Thursday, April 15, 2021, from 6 – 7pm. Watch for more details on the CMA website and social media platforms.

Museum Hours, Timed Ticketing, and Health Protocols

Beginning Saturday, April 10, CMA will return to regular operating hours for its galleries: Tuesday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m. The Museum will be closed to the public on Mondays.

Under CMA's COVID-19 protocols and procedures, masks, social distancing, and limited capacity attendance remains in effect. Advance, timed-ticketed reservations are required through the CMA website at cantonart.org/reservetickets. Regular CMA admission prices apply. Free Thursdays offer free admission to all, courtesy of PNC Foundation. CMA members always receive free admission.

CMA continues to follow guidelines from the Ohio Governor's Office and Ohio Department of Public Health, CDC, the American Alliance of Museums, and best practices set forth by museum directors across the state and country for safe operations amid COVID-19. To learn what to expect for a comfortable and safe visit, please read "[Visiting CMA with COVID-19 Precautions](#)" at cantonart.org.

Mort Künstler: "The Godfather" of Pulp Fiction Illustrators

Renowned as the "premier historical artist in America", America's Civil War painter, and an iconic illustrative painter of American history, Mort Künstler established his career as one of the most prolific illustrators of the twentieth century. His early work is featured in this new exhibition, *Mort Künstler: "The Godfather" of Pulp Fiction Illustrators*, which includes more than 70 original paintings that graced the covers of American publications throughout the 1950s and '60s. These dramatic scenes portray daring

heists, POW escapes, standoffs with wild animals, and military strikes, revealing the anxieties and deep-seated desires that gripped the nation during the Cold War era.

The exhibition also explores Künstler's collaboration with Mario Puzo, resulting in the first visual character studies of *The Godfather's* Corleone family. Vivid, provocative, and boldly kinetic, this exhibition offers museum visitors an action-packed odyssey through a classic American cultural landscape that has all but vanished.

The artist's larger-than-life role in the golden era of pulp fiction unfolds throughout the exhibition, with most works direct from his private collection and almost all being publically exhibited for the first time through this tour.

Mort Künstler: "The Godfather" of Pulp Fiction Illustrators was organized by The Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, NY, was curated by Michael W. Schantz and Lisa Chalif, and is toured by International Arts & Artists, Washington, DC.

Founded in 1920, **The Heckscher Museum of Art** presents dynamic exhibitions and inspiring museum programs, serving the people of the Town of Huntington and all of Long Island, NY. It maintains an important permanent collection that includes more than 2,300 pieces by American and European artists. Today The Heckscher Museum strives to thrive and grow in the quality of its collections, exhibitions, and school and public programs. The Heckscher Museum of Art is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) educational organization, and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Museum's building is included on the National Register of Historic Places.

International Arts & Artists in Washington, DC, is a non-profit arts service organization dedicated to increasing cross-cultural understanding and exposure to the arts internationally, through exhibitions, programs and services to artists, arts institutions and the public. Visit www.artsandartists.org

Three More New Exhibitions Also On-View at CMA

We've Got Issues: Myra Schuetter Watercolors

Myra Schuetter is a native of Jasper, Indiana and has been working in this particular style of watercolor for about 40 years. Her highly involved, realistic, and colorful large scale paintings are full of thought and meaning. Much of the detail centers around small action figures and toys who help tell the story. Often, the topics of current events, politics, social and cultural issues and persistent biases are represented in her imagery – rich in detail, color and in a multitude of objects to relay the message behind the work.

Schuetter says, "I use realism, along with the scale of my work, to not only draw in the viewer, but to keep their interest long enough to recognize that there is much more going on than what originally appeared to them. I consider realism another tool to draw in the viewer, keep their attention and get them to think about the issues that are being presented."

Tomorrow...An Unknown Quantity: The Work of Lee Kessler

Born and raised in Canton, Ohio, Leland "Lee" Kessler grew up with a passion for art and aviation. He joined the Army Air Corps with the onset of World War II where he trained to be a gunner and flew 18 missions in the ETO (European Tour of Operations) before he was shot down over Wilhelmshaven, Germany on his 19th raid. He was hailed a hero for getting other crewmen out of the stricken plane. Captured immediately, Kessler spent nine days at Dulag Luft Interrogation Center before he was sent to Stalag 7A Moosberg, then to Stalag 17B in Krems, Austria. He was then forced to march west before he was liberated in the woods by a tank division of Patton's 3rd Army May 2, 1945.

Early in his enlistment, Kessler had been sketching portraits in the evenings for something to do, so when a Sergeant asked if there were any artists among the outfit, he was quickly pointed out. His job was to make "wet paint" signs while the other guys marched in line outside in the cold. He decided he wanted to milk the job as long as he could, and he said he "made the most beautiful signs they had ever seen."

It was during this time that Kessler began to work on the squadron "nose art". Pilots would come and ask him to paint a picture of something on the nose of their plane. If they had no idea, Kessler would create a

design and if they approved, he went with it. The first plane he had painted was the “Eager Beaver”. It became the most popular and flew to the end of the war. The nose with the painting by Kessler is on display at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, Georgia. Other planes were “Montana Power”, “Seelos Sleeper”, “Grim Reaper”, and “Yankee Raider” – all of which were shot down and destroyed during the war.

After the war, Lee continued to produce a wide range of artwork, much of which depicted scenes he encountered during his service overseas. His artwork is featured on the cover for the 306th Bomb Group history book “First Over Germany” and he volunteered time at MAPS Air Museum where he repainted and retouched nose art on aircraft. He wrote an autobiographical account of his life from the time of enlistment through liberation titled “Tomorrow...An Unknown Quantity”. Excerpts from this book can be found throughout the exhibition.

Kessler is best known for his drawing titled *The Hand*. A print of the drawing is in the permanent collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The original drawing will be part of the exhibition.

Collection Gems: Celebrating 85 Years of CMA

For its 85th anniversary, one of the Canton Museum of Art's philanthropic groups, the Volunteer Angels, along with CMA's staff, has chosen their favorite highlights from CMA Collection. All of their choices will be displayed in this exhibit – *Collection Gems: Celebrating 85 Years of CMA*. Each work includes detail about the piece and why it is a “Collection Gem” to the person who selected it.

Established in the late 1930s, the focus of CMA's Collection is American works on paper from the 19th century forward, with an emphasis on watercolors, and American ceramics from the 1950s through today. With more than 1,500 select pieces, the Museum's Collection ranks as one of the finest in Ohio.

Included in the CMA Collection are American masters of watercolor such as Andrew Wyeth, Edward Hopper, Winslow Homer, John Singer Sargent, Childe Hassam, and Charles Burchfield, in addition to important oils, prints, drawings, and other works by Andy Warhol, Clyde Singer, Julian Stanczak, Roy Lichtenstein, and Thomas Hart Benton among others. Periods represented range from Impressionism and Realism to American Regionalism, Abstract Expressionism, Contemporary, and more.

Artists such as Viktor Schreckengost, Toshiko Takaezu, Peter Voukos, and Viola Frey are important figures in the Museum's ceramic holdings. Reflecting the Ohio region's richness in ceramics, including the influence of Cleveland School artists and Cowan Pottery, CMA's collection provides exciting opportunities for discovery.

At the close of its 85th anniversary season, it is with great pride that the Volunteer Angels and staff of CMA celebrate all that Collection has to offer with this exhibition, featuring works by several of the acclaimed American artists named above.

CMA's 2020 – 2021 85th Anniversary season is presented with generous support in part from: The Timken Foundation of Canton, PNC Bank, Visit Canton, Stark Community Foundation, The Anthony J. and Susan E. Paparella Family Foundation, and The Hoover Foundation. CMA receives operating support from ArtsInStark and the Ohio Arts Council.

About the Canton Museum of Art

The Canton Museum of Art is recognized for powerful original exhibitions and national touring exhibitions focused on American art – and making the discovery and exploration of art accessible to all. The Museum's education outreach programs, classes, and workshops serve thousands of students of all ages. CMA's collection focuses on American works on paper, primarily watercolors, and contemporary ceramics. Founded in 1935, CMA is one of three museums in Stark County accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and serves more than 45,000 visitors each year. CMA is celebrating its 85th Anniversary in the 2020 – 2021 season. Visit cantonart.org to learn more.

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