

GREENVILLE COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

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News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Hooper Exhibition Opens June 26 in Greenville

Paintings by Charleston artist Jill Hooper will be featured in an exhibition that opens June 26, 2010, at the Greenville County Museum of Art. An exceptional, classically trained realist painter whose accomplished technique has won international recognition, Hooper has long been regarded as a vital talent among emerging artists. The exhibition, organized by the museum with Ann Long Fine Art (Charleston, SC) offers Upstate South Carolina its first glimpse of Hooper's latest figurative work and an extraordinary lowcountry landscape.

Born in 1970 in Upstate New York, Hooper moved with her family to Southern Pines, North Carolina, where she met the noted painter and muralist D. Jeffrey Mims. She studied under Mims for nearly seven years, in both Florence, Italy, and in North Carolina, while she also completed a fine arts degree at the College of Charleston.

There were others who saw her promise: realist painters Charles Cecil and Ben Long were among her mentors. She attended Cecil's atelier-style workshop in Florence, Italy, and worked under Ben Long both abroad and in Charleston. She mastered traditional techniques from both. She began to grind her own pigments and developed a facility with grisaille, a method of monochromatic underpainting that establishes a solid underpinning for classically conceived paintings.

All of her teachers emphasized the importance of drawing in the creation of a realist work, and the Greenville exhibition includes several examples in which a charcoal study is shown in tandem with a finished version of the subject in oil. Hooper is fluent with charcoal: her 2009 *Study for Jacob* achieves remarkable texture and effect in rich shades of gray and black.

There are stories in Hooper's portraits. She knows her subjects, and it is important to her that these models are people she likes and respects. The trick, she says, "is to convey something of meaning without being obvious."

Her self-portraits follow through on this premise, although some might conclude that her view of herself is darker than her view of others. The 2006 self-portrait *Pugnis et Calcibus* ("With Fist and Heels") offers an angry visage that Hooper says depicted her self-image at the time. "I wanted to paint myself as a monster, because that was how I felt." The painting was selected for an international honor in 2006 and was exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in London. There are other self-portraits that chart her self-expression from 1994 to the present: her newest reveals a woman who has advanced introspectively, a growth she reflects in her statement about the work in this exhibition: "This show is really about the effort to live an honest life. These paintings have gone in a direction that is sincere to me."

The exhibition *Jill Hooper* runs through September 26, 2010. Hooper will be in Greenville for a gallery talk about her work on Thursday, August 12, at 6:30 pm.

The Greenville County Museum of Art is located at 420 College Street, on the Heritage Green cultural campus in downtown Greenville, South Carolina. The museum is open Tuesday–Sunday: galleries open at 11 am Tuesday through Saturday and at 1pm on Sunday, closing at 5:00 pm except on Thursdays, when they remain open until 8:00.

Admission to the Greenville County Museum of Art remains absolutely free.