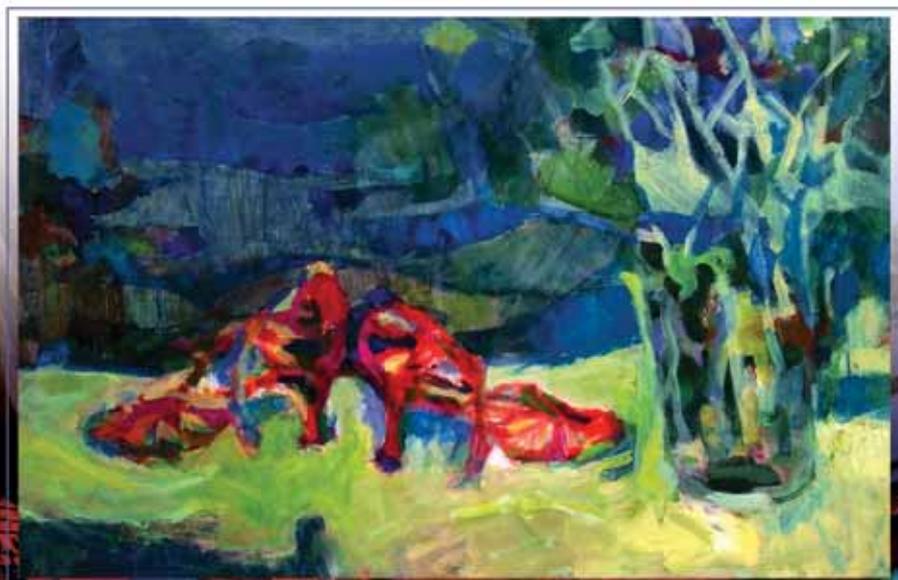


Mary Lynne Levy

MAG FEATURED ARTIST



FORTY-SECOND
MONTGOMERY ART GUILD
MUSEUM EXHIBITION

April 29 - August 6, 2017

MONTGOMERY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

Mary Lynne Levy

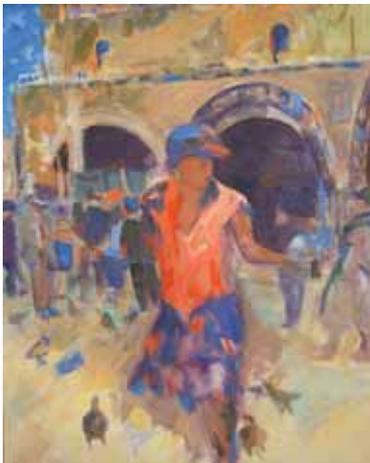


Sad Shack,
1979, acrylic
on board,
Collection of
May Donnell

Montgomery is a riverfront town. Between 1817 and 1819, the first settlers chose the city's location specifically because of its access to a navigable river, surrounded by woodlands. Its character as a city is defined by these natural features—even in the twenty-first century the river and countryside define natural boundaries for its residents.

If there is truly a “Montgomery artist,” Mary Lynne Levy is a prime example as her subject matter is frequently the fabric of the town and its surroundings. A daughter of Montgomery, she has spent the majority of her life here. Over her lifetime she has embraced various roles—wife, mother, professional counselor—but asserts that her role as an artist is as central to her identity as any of the rest.

Mary Lynne began taking art lessons around 1955, painting with a group of like-minded women (and one intrepid gentleman) under the guidance of painter Charles Shannon. Shannon was schooled at the Cleveland School of Art and returned to Montgomery, becoming a sought-after art instructor. By the 1960s, she was a member of a loosely affiliated group of student-artists who became known as the Riverfront Painters because their original studio/meeting place was located downtown in an old commercial building on Bell Street, which runs parallel to the Alabama River. They recruited a number of other experienced local artists—including Jake Wagon, Barbara Gallagher, and Clark Walker—to critique their work when Shannon's administrative duties at Auburn University at Montgomery precluded regular help. Interestingly, there is one important element of the instruction Mary Lynne received in that environment that she continues to appreciate. She notes that these artist-teachers de-emphasized



My Mother in Venice, 1982, acrylic on canvas



Fishing with Grandmother and Mrs. Craig, ca. 1990, acrylic on paper

Over the some sixty years that she has produced artwork in Montgomery, Mary Lynne's evocative landscapes of her "home place" have become her best-known work. Her paintings of pasture lands, dotted with old farm buildings or run-down cabins, painted in her signature brushy, colorful style that emphasizes shape and contour over descriptive line, grace many local residences and businesses. *Sad Shack* (1979), represents this genre, with its harmonious blends of greens, rusty browns, and shades of terracotta capturing the character of old buildings subsumed by forces of time and nature. She happened upon many of these rural subjects when painting for pleasure and companionship with her good friend Hilda Slager, another member of the Riverfront group. On their regular outings they traveled through the surrounding counties and into small communities to find subjects for their work, capturing the essence of the Alabama landscape while sharing stories of their families and lives.

The central role that "artist" plays in Mary Lynne's life is also apparent from the many works in this exhibition that normally hang in her own home. These cherished paintings depict a greater range of subjects, including images from travels, her cherished garden, and, most notably, family. Her devotion to her mother is apparent in tributes such as *My Mother's Red Dancing Shoes* (ca. 1990) and *My Mother in Venice* (1982). Equally poignant is an almost dream-like composition titled *Fishing with Grandmother and Mrs. Craig* (ca. 1990). In these paintings, she uses her longtime favorite acrylic medium as a wash so that fields of color structure the compositions. These paintings are in many cases fragmented—as is the nature of memory—with details merely suggested to place emphasis upon "remembrance" rather than the concreteness of the image itself.

For each of us, a lifetime is the flow of lived experience that carries the individual along in time. Many artists preserve their life's experiences, their spiritual values, and intellectual philosophies by distilling them into imagery. Mary Lynne Levy's love of her home, her family, her friends, and her community helps her capture this life force through her art. That love is given tangible form in the paintings she has made.



A-Bar-A Landscape, 2010, acrylic on paper

— Margaret Lynne Ausfeld

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Portrait of John Smith at Rest, ca. 1990, acrylic on board

The Museum is grateful to **Mary Lynne Levy** for the loan of much of the work included in this exhibition and for permission to reproduce the images in this brochure.

We are also grateful to the many admirers who provided information and enthusiastic support for this show, and to other collectors who loaned art for the exhibition:

**Gery Anderson • May Donnell • Jamie and Carol Loeb • Joan Loeb
Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Mussafer • Janet Waller**

The MAG MMFA exhibition with Featured Artist Mary Lynne Levy is sponsored by **Margaret Berry Lowder, Aldridge Borden & Company, and Sterling Bank.**

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts
MMFA

The mission of the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret art of the highest quality for the enrichment, enlightenment, and enjoyment of its public.

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

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On the Cover: My Mother's Red Dancing Shoes, ca. 1990, acrylic on paper