

For Immediate Press Release:

Working with the Charles Culver curator Andrea Gerring, the Charlevoix Circle of Arts presents *A Charles Culver Retrospective* opening on September 29 from 5-7 pm and running through November 4th. Bellaire artist Charles Beech Culver was born in 1908 and his life ended in 1967. He loved jazz music, and for a short time in the late 20's and early 30's went on the road as a musician to earn extra money, playing tenor sax and clarinet. In addition to music, Culver had worked as a cartoonist for the Royal Oak Tribune in the 1920's. Culver's love of music, his work on children's books and cartoons were only hobbies, and to make money he worked several years at the Chevrolet Studios in the General Motors Building in Detroit as a commercial artist.

In the 1930's, Culver began receiving invitations to exhibit his paintings in galleries such as the Gordon Beer Gallery in Detroit, the Detroit Artists Market, the Michigan Artists at the DIA, and then branching out to places like the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio, and the International Watercolor Exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago, to name just a few.

In the 1950's, he began teaching at what is now known as The College for Creative Studies and was a commissioned artist with the Ford Times. The former director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, E. P. Richardson was quoted as saying, "People say 'That's a Culver' when they enter a room of paintings and see the one that speaks his name, the one whose form and line and color identify the artist instantly. Charles Culver was a true artist."

It is certain that many others thought of Culver with the same kind of respect. He had over 25 one-man shows in the Detroit area alone, won 14 prizes at the "Exhibition for Michigan Artists" sponsored by the DIA, including the Scarab Club Gold Medal in 1940-43, and is represented (according to a curator at the DIA in 2006) by some 90 paintings in the DIA's permanent collection, more than any other Michigan artist at that time.

In a 1952 article in the Detroit Free Press, entitled "*Artist Explains His Work*," Culver was asked why he painted the way he did. He wrote, "I try to 'see' though not too exactly; I try to think though not too ponderously; I feel emotion yet I try not to become overwrought. I interpret rather than describe, and design rather than depict. I work with values, not light and shade; hence, when I am successful, I achieve substance rather than three-dimensional form, and this satisfies me as being wholly sufficient. In my work, I wish to be serious without becoming a bore, exuberant without being frivolous, humorous without being silly. I believe that good paintings are conceived, not contrived; and I am interested in art much more than in pictures."

Charles Culver is probably most well-known for his animal portraits. One of his first was a six-toed cat belonging to the family and went on from there to include deer, ducks, exotic birds, cows, common forest animals such as raccoons and skunks, and wild beasts he could look at in zoos. These paintings are distinctive, recognizable usually by a background of a soft mottled coloring, and a watercolor technique that never looks washed out and, in later years, he began adding wax to the outline of the animal or in the background of many of the works.

The exhibition *A Charles Culver Retrospective* runs from September 29-November 4 and is free and open to the public. Curator Andrea Gerring will present an Inner Circle Gallery Talk on

October 12 beginning at 10 am to discuss the life and work of Charles Culver. For more information please contact the Charlevoix Circle of Arts located at 109 Clinton Street in downtown Charlevoix, (231) 547-3554 or go online at: www.charlevoixcircle.com.