

# Focus on the Humanities

JULY 2007 - MISSISSIPPI HUMANITIES COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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## Contents:

- Vicksburg Hosts *New Harmonies* Exhibit Through Aug. 9
- Social History of Mississippi Explored in MHC-Funded Stitchery Exhibit
- MHC Gives \$34,724 for Humanities Programming
- Upcoming Humanities Events in Mississippi
- Next MHC Grant Deadlines Sept. 1 and Sept. 15, 2007

## Vicksburg Hosts *New Harmonies* Exhibit Through Aug. 9

(VICKSBURG, MS) – After a well-attended run in New Albany, the Mississippi Humanities Council's traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibit *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* opened at the Southern Cultural Heritage Center in Vicksburg June 28 with a month of related events scheduled. This full-color interactive exhibit tells the story of how the cultural blending of the American people has resulted in more kinds of music than any other country on earth. The exhibit includes sound stations where visitors may hear examples of roots music, hands-on instrument displays and hundreds of photographs depicting the founders and performers of America's unique sounds. The exhibition will examine the progression of American roots music, as rich and eclectic as our country itself, from blues, country and gospel to zydeco, tejano, bluegrass and klezmer.



MHC Executive Director Barbara Carpenter, left, and Project Specialist David Morgan, right, pose with Lewis Spencer of the Red Tops dance band, who performed as part of the New Harmonies opening festivities in Vicksburg.

New Harmonies will be on view at SCHF through August 9, Monday – Saturday from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. daily. Related events will include:

- Roots music lectures by folk music historian Chris Goertzen on July 10 and Mississippi folk life specialist Larry Morrisey July 17;
- Public concert by Mississippi bluesmen Cadillac John and Bill Abel July 19;
- Children's Folk Art and Folk Music Camp July 23–27;
- Delta Mountain Boys Bluegrass Concert (with "O Brother Where Art Thou" songs) July 26;
- Sacred harp singing featuring more than 75 shape note singers from across the United States July 28;
- Gospel brunch with local musician Patrick Smith Aug. 5

All events are free\* to the public and will take place at the Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation, 1302 Adams Street, Vicksburg. Registration is required for some events. For details, please visit [www.southernculture.org](http://www.southernculture.org) or call 601-631-2997 or email [info@southernculture.org](mailto:info@southernculture.org).

New Harmonies will tour Mississippi throughout 2007 and part of 2008, moving next to Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Gulfport. Visit [www.mshumanities.org](http://www.mshumanities.org) for a complete tour schedule.

\*The Children's Folk Art and Folk Music Camp and the Gospel Brunch have a meal or supply fee.

## Social History of Mississippi Explored in MHC–Funded Stitchery Exhibit

(LAUREL, MS) – The Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, with support from the Mississippi Humanities Council, recently featured more than 30 artworks by Belzoni artist Ethel Wright Mohamed, including preparatory drawings and several stitchery pieces never before exhibited. These colorful stitched works present a glimpse into the social history of Mississippi in the 19th and 20th centuries. One-room schoolhouses, a merchant peddling from his wagon, shape-note singing, a river baptism; these were among the subjects from daily life that Mohamed painted with needle and thread.



*Reflections on Spring Creek, 1972;*  
15 3/4"x22" Fabric, embroidery floss.  
Property of Mama's Dream World,  
Belzoni, MS.

Born in 1906, Mohamed spent her adulthood raising eight children and helping her husband, Hassan Mohamed, run their general store. After his death, she began to recount stories of their life together in her embroideries. His Lebanese heritage and her deep Mississippi roots combined to create a family that turned two legacies into one unique family story. In the 1970s, she was "discovered" by a Smithsonian field agent and thereafter, her work was exhibited in Jackson, MS; Washington, DC; and elsewhere. Later she turned her home into a museum, "Mama's Dream World", which her daughters have continued to maintain since her death in 1992.

Visit [www.tfaoi.com/aa/7aa/7aa761.htm](http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/7aa/7aa761.htm) to read a gallery guide text about the exhibit.

## MHC Gives \$34,724 for Humanities Programming

The Mississippi Humanities Council recently approved several grant applications totaling \$34,724. The approved projects span a variety of humanities disciplines and include:

***Mississippi History NOW.*** Sponsor: Mississippi Historical Society. Award: \$2,000. New content management system will be purchased to allow editor of MHC-supported *Mississippi History NOW* online history publication to manage design and navigation on the site.

***New Harmonies and Related Projects.*** Sponsor: Marion County Historical Society: \$2,000. MHC funds will be used for companion events and exhibits for the traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibit, *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music*, when it visits Columbia.

***Material Mississippi: Documenting Contemporary Regional Folk Art.*** Sponsor: Delta Center for Culture and Learning. Award: \$1,620. MHC funds will be used for planning and pre-production costs for documentary films on the work of contemporary Mississippi Delta artists.

***A Civil Rights Odyssey through Puppetry: The Struggle for Justice.*** Sponsor: University of Southern Mississippi. Award: \$2,204. Artist and historian will create multidisciplinary civil rights program for ninth grade students using puppets.

***Southern Humanities Media Fund.*** Sponsor: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Award: \$12,500. MHC funds inventive film, television, and radio programs and is particularly interested in media productions that focus on the "new face" of the South, offering insights into the region's changing social, economic, and political conditions.

**Hurricane Katrina and South Mississippi Hispanic Immigrants.** Sponsor: The University of Southern Mississippi. Award: \$2,000. Oral histories will be collected from 30 first-generation Hispanic immigrants to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, focusing on their experiences before, during and after Hurricane Katrina. Interviews will be used to create an educational web site with pedagogical materials for use in grades 7–12.

**Neshoba County Fair Oral History Project.** Sponsor: Philadelphia/Neshoba County Historical Museum. Award: \$2,000. Oral histories will be collected from longtime participants of the Neshoba County Fair.

**15<sup>th</sup> Annual Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival.** Sponsor: Coahoma Community College. Award: \$5,000. Support for annual Tennessee Williams festival.

**Unburied Treasures: Living Mississippi Treasures.** Sponsor: Mississippi Museum of Art. Award: \$5,400. MHC funds will support another season of the Mississippi Museum of Art's monthly series examining portions of the museum's collection through visual art, music and literature.

## Upcoming Humanities Events in Mississippi

- July 18–Dec. 18, 2007, *Unburied Treasures: Living Mississippi Treasures*, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS. A monthly series celebrating visual art, music and literature, presented on the third Tuesday of each month July through December 2007. Each one-hour program features a work from the Mississippi Museum of Art's permanent collection and includes guest artists, musicians and readers.
- July 20–27, 2007, *Neshoba County Fair Oral History Project*, Neshoba County Fair, Philadelphia, MS. Oral histories will be collected from long-time participants of the Neshoba County Fair July 20–27, 2007, focusing on the changes at the Fair over the past 25–30 years and the storytelling traditions found at the event. A public program will be presented in September/October.
- Oct. 1–31, 2007, *A Civil Rights Odyssey Through Puppetry: The Struggle for Justice*, Smith–Robertson Museum, Jackson, MS. A collaborative project involving the ancient art of Javanese puppetry and oral history to educate Mississippi students about this state's Civil Rights history. Beginning in Jackson at the Smith–Robertson Museum, the show will travel to USM and other universities, colleges, public schools and private institutions throughout the state over a two-year period.
- Oct. 6, 2007, *Marion County Historical Society Heritage Festival & Flea Market*, Columbia, MS. Annual Heritage Festival events will complement a traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibition on display at the Marion

County Historical Society Museum Oct. 2–Nov. 14. Musical performances will focus on genres indigenous to the local area, including blues, zydeco, early rock-n-roll, gospel and blue grass. Discussion programs will also be offered on sacred harp singing, the music of Merle Haggard and the evolution of music.

For more information about Mississippi Humanities Council-sponsored events, please visit the Events Calendar on the Mississippi Humanities Council web site: [www.mshumanities.org](http://www.mshumanities.org).

## **Next MHC Grant Deadlines Sept. 1 and Sept. 15, 2007**

Sept. 1, 2007, is the next Mississippi Humanities Council minigrant application deadline for proposals up to \$2,000. Sept. 15, 2007, is the next regular grant application deadline for proposals over \$2,000. Application guidelines and forms are available at [www.mshumanities.org](http://www.mshumanities.org).

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