

THE ADVOCATE

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Art blooms in Surls show at LASM

BY ROBIN MILLER
Arts writer

Flowers grow in the Soupcon Gallery.

They blossom in wood and steel. Well, mostly wood, for that's James Surls' preferred sculpting medium.

"He grew up playing with his brother in the woods, so this is his medium of choice," Elizabeth Weinstein said.

She's the curator at the Louisiana Art & Science Museum, where Surls' work will be on exhibit through Sunday, March 15. She emphasizes that this exhibit is only a sampling of Surls' work.

"He's an important contemporary artist," Weinstein said. "His work can be found in collections throughout the country."

And pieces from some of those private collections are found here.

Surls' work has been likened to visual poetry, described as ritualistic, surrealistic, primitive, romantic and mystic.

Spotlight: James Surls

WHAT: An exhibit featuring the work of sculptor James Surls.

WHEN: Runs through Sunday, March 15. Hours are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and 1-5 p.m. Sunday.

WHERE: Louisiana Art & Science Museum, 100 S. River Road.

ADMISSION: \$6, adults; \$5, seniors age 65 and older and children ages 2-12; \$4, groups of 15 or more; free, museum members.

INFORMATION: Call (225) 344-5272 or (225) 344-9478 or e-mail lasmm@lasmm.org.

Also, James Surls will participate in the Louisiana Art & Science Museum's Fine Art, Fine Wine program, 5-7 p.m. Thursday, March 12. The program is \$5 for museum members and \$10 for non-members. The artist also will speak in the LSU College of Art and Design's Distinguished Lecture Series at 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 11, in Room 103 of the Art and Design Building on campus. The lecture is free.

That's a lot of fancy descriptions for work that's totally accessible even for the youngest of viewers.

For to enter Soupcon Gallery is to enter Surls' world of forest images. Flowers dominate, as do human profiles that blend with what looks to be waving reeds. Or vines. Or canes.

It's your choice — Surls

leaves it up to you.

Surls was born in 1943. He's been carving, hacking, burning, peeling and shaping pieces of wood into sculptures for more than 35 years. The museum's statement probably says it best:

"Surls' work is intensely personal, as it springs forth from within the depths of his memory and experience. Conjured

from natural materials, his work has been likened to visual poetry, combining abstract forms with recognizable imagery such as figures, houses or flowers."

Surls will be in Baton Rouge Wednesday and Thursday, March 11-12, to participate in two programs in conjunction with his exhibit. He'll speak first at the LSU College of Art and Design's Distinguished Lecture Series Wednesday and participate in the museum's Fine Art, Fine Wine program on Thursday.

"We're hoping some of the students who attend the lecture will come to our program, as well," Weinstein. "He'll be very accessible at our program, and they'll be able to talk with him and ask questions."

Surls grew up in the piney woods of East Texas. He resided many years in Splendora, Texas, and is now hailed as one of Texas' foremost artists, though he now lives in Aspen, Colo.



Photo courtesy of the artist and Arthur Roger Gallery

'Seeing from the Pitcher' is a 2005 bronze work by James Surls.

Back in the Soupcon Gallery, Weinstein walks among the pieces, pointing out the recurring theme of the eye in Surls' art, most prominent on the

petals of his flowers. She tells of how Surls considers reshaping of wood as reshaping of spirits.

It's all here in the Soupcon Gallery. All in a world of its own.