

Book on late artist, poet to be released in 2018

Proceeds to benefit new foundation in Gertrude McCarty Smith's honor

Mississippi native Gertrude McCarty Smith's introduction to art was a box of crayons her grandmother used to bribe her to milk cows during the harsh depression years. That encouragement led to 1,000+ paintings and hundreds of poems & newspaper columns in *The News-Commercial* and *Hattiesburg American*. Though it has been ten years since her passing, Smith's creative spirit lives on and will be commemorated in two very special ways. First, "Kaleidoscope" – a hardbound book of her art and writings is due out next year. Secondly, a Foundation is being established to continue her lifetime work of encouraging everyone, young and old alike, to express their own unique creativity.

Smith (b.1923 - d. 2007) captured the beauty and emotions of simple everyday rural life through words and colors – starting as an 8-year old child growing up in the era of the horse and buggy, continuing until she was surfing across the Internet. To most, she lived a simple unassuming life, in reality she was an incredibly brave Mississippi trailblazer – far ahead of her time. She was a nationally published writer at age 18 and her art resides in collections throughout the United States and Europe. Her encouraging story garnered wide media attention including *Southern Living Magazine* and their cable TV show. She received numerous lifetime achievement awards; "Ageless Hero for Creativity" from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mississippi, "Honored Artist", the National Museum of Women in the Arts – Mississippi State Committee, and a "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Mississippi Poetry Society.

THE BOOK

"Kaleidoscope", the 132-page coffee table book, will be a retrospective of her career. The book plans include a critique by international art dealer Stephen Rosenberg and negotiations are ongoing with the distinguished University Press of Mississippi for a tentative publication date of Fall 2018.

N Y C - b a s e d R o s e n b e r g remarked, "Gertrude is a remarkable and authentic American woman who teaches us that talent and creativity combined with a humanistic spirit is both a state of mind and a state of grace--at any age," upon his visit to the Red Barn Gallery when Smith turned 80 years young. He also left with one of her watercolors called "Swamp Song" for his own collection.

The title, "Kaleidoscope," was a recurring theme in her work and was used as the name of her first chapbook of poetry published in the 1980s. Smith once

wrote in her Hattiesburg American On Now and Then column, "In looking back at some of the things in my own lifetime, the kaleidoscope of changing scenes is clear in my mind."

THE FOUNDATION
The Gertrude McCarty Smith Foundation for the Arts was her hope and dream to bring access and passion for literature, performance and visual arts to children and communities throughout Mississippi. Smith always believed that a passion for art had to be cultivated and nourished, much like the flowers grown in her gardens she often painted.

The Foundation's goals are to fulfill her wishes by becoming an organization that supports artists of all kinds and helps accomplish their dreams.

According to her daughter Antje Smith Hill, "My mother always wanted to make a difference in the lives of the people around her and she accomplished this by inspiring them through her words and

images; in some cases to release their own inner artist." The Foundation's objectives are to improve the quality of life in Mississippi, starting with the Greater Pine Belt region, by:

- Providing young and old in rural communities the same access to the arts as afforded to others in metropolitan cities.
- Encouraging and promoting artists and the creative industries within communities.
- Facilitate formal training and career paths for young artists to reach their highest potential.

The initial programs will center on arts activities for families, teachers, libraries, senior centers, hospitals, mental health programs and community organizations.

While inclusion and access to all are core values of the organization, the first programs are focused on two main audiences: Children 5 & under with their families and 60+ population. Overwhelming research shows both groups' brain function, health and quality of life are significantly improved with creative activities, yet they typically have less access to structured and supportive arts instruction. Additionally, when the "Kaleidoscope" book is released, a statewide tour of libraries is planned with activities for all ages like making kaleidoscopes and personal chapbooks.

CALL FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

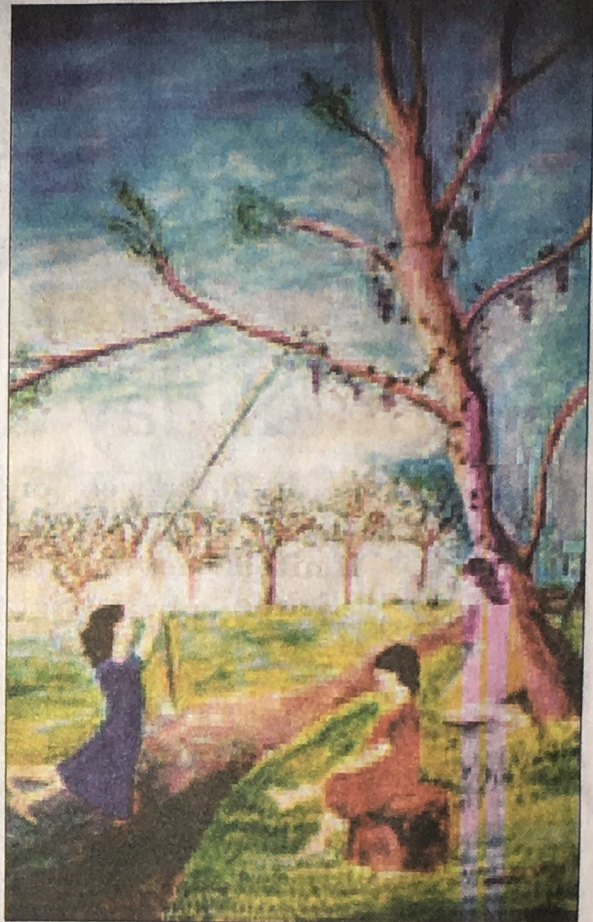
The book and foundation have been spearheaded by Smith's daughters Antje (Smith) Hill, Annette (Smith) Hamill, Wanda (Smith) Brooks, and granddaughter Johanna (Brooks) Burlingham. Countless other family, including her siblings,



The works of Gertrude McCarty-Smith are soon to be released in a new book.

and friends who have supported Smith throughout the years also continue to promote Smith's legacy. However, to fully make her wishes a reality, the help of the entire community is needed. "While we have cataloged more than 1000+ artworks and 100+ poems 17 years ago, we know there are many more in museums, local banks, hospitals, government offices and private collections around U.S. and beyond. We are asking for the public's help in

mail.com. During the startup process of the Gertrude McCarty Smith Foundation, it is operating under the umbrella of The Greater PineBelt Community Foundation. The public is encouraged to make tax-deductible contributions through them to cover hard costs for book preparations, developing the virtual gallery of her works and launch community arts programs. There are no administrative



costs – a team of volunteers are generously donating their time and effort. As an added benefit, all those who donate \$100 or more by May 31 will become a celebrated member of the Foundation's Founders Circle with special benefits. Checks should be payable to PineBelt Community Foundation, with Gertrude McCarty Smith Fund on the

memo line and sent to the following address: Pine Belt Community Foundation, 1507 Hardy Street, Suite 208, Hattiesburg, MS 39401. Or you can give online at: pinebelt-foundation.org. For volunteer and partnership opportunities or other questions, please contact Johanna Burlingham at: gmsmithproject@gmail.com.

locating every work to be photographed and recorded for prosperity, as well as considered for possible inclusion in the book," says Burlingham. "Sadly, several of her prized works have already been lost during Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, her first published writings were in a patriotic poetry anthology in 1942 where it stated that she had 300+ songs ready for sale. Those works have never been found." If you have one of Smith's artworks, the Foundation is asking you to email a photo, including her signature if it appears (front or back) and any known details like name, year, medium, size and how you received it to: gmsmithproject@gmail.com