

Source: Martha Scott, 532-7718, marthas@k-state.edu

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Cutlines: The gelatin silver print "Cain and his wife 'possum" by Earl Iversen is the 2012 Friends of the Beach Museum gift print

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PICTURE PERFECT: LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER EARL IVERSEN IS FRIENDS OF THE BEACH MUSEUM GIFT PRINT ARTIST FOR 2012

MANHATTAN -- A landscape photographer known for his work with Kansas grassroots art sites is the 2012 Friends of the Beach Museum of Art gift print artist. The honor, awarded by the support group for Kansas State University's art museum, showcases one of the best artists in the state or region each year.

Earl Iversen, associate professor emeritus of photography at the University of Kansas, is this year's gift print artist. A Chicago native, Iversen earned a bachelor's in communication design at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle in 1970 and a master of fine arts from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1973. In 1974, Iversen and his wife, Susan, moved from Boston to Kansas in a Volkswagen microbus. Since then the Kansas landscape, natural and built, has provided an unending source of subjects for his lens.

Iversen is particularly interested in grassroots art sites, the profoundly expressive environments created out of common materials by eccentric individuals with no formal art training, said Bill North, curator of the Beach Museum of Art. Iversen traces his attraction to grassroots art to an incident he witnessed in Munich, Germany, in the 1960s. A man had built a scaled-down version of a Russian Orthodox church using trash he collected from the city's streets. When city officials attempted to remove the work with a bulldozer, supporters organized in an effort to prevent its destruction.

Iversen said the episode was a fascinating study in the interplay of an eccentric artist and the maintenance of the status quo. It also was the catalyst for his longtime interest in photographing grassroots art sites in Kansas, around the country and abroad.

Kansas is particularly fertile ground for grassroots art. The state ranks third in the country, behind Wisconsin and California, in the number of grassroots art sites, according to the Kansas Grassroots Arts Center in **Lucas**. The state's most notable site is S.P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden in Lucas. Over the past several years, Iversen has been working with large view cameras to create black-and-white views of the concrete sculptural environment that entwines the area around Dinsmoor's limestone cabin home.

Iversen's decision to use what he calls "very large, practically primitive wood film cameras...requiring big tripods firmly planted on the ground" was prompted by his desire to slow down and make more deliberate images in the most simple and elemental way possible.

Concurrent with his Garden of Eden work, Iversen has been using the same cameras to photograph views of the woods surrounding Mary's Lake, a small public fishing area in **Lawrence**. The Lucas and Lawrence sites hold similar appeal for the photographer.

"They are spacious environments to roam around and observe: full of fascinating curvilinear sculptural forms reaching up and having cathedral-like qualities flavored by an atmosphere of mystery, contortion and dread," Iversen said.

An exhibition of Iversen's work will be on display in the Beach Museum's Ruth Ann Wefald Gallery from Feb. 14-May 20. It will feature selections of recent work from his Garden of Eden and Mary's Lake projects. The 2012 gift print is Iversen's "Cain with his wife and 'possum" and will be available for purchase at the museum. The photo is one of Iversen's Garden of Eden images, taken in 2010. Only 20 prints are available for purchase by Friends of the Beach Museum of Art members who are at the \$250 level or higher.

Iversen also will give a talk about his work at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, at the museum. It is free and open to the public.

"I'll be talking in general about my 38 years of visual experiences making pictures in Kansas and working in the context of landscape of huge skies and sometimes seemingly overwhelming horizontality," he said. "It's a matter of choice what we decide to enclose in the rectangle of a picture and I like to talk about how those choices get made."

As part of his talk, Iversen is bringing along one of his big wood cameras he uses for his work.

The Friends of the Beach Museum of Art commissions a printmaker or photographer to produce a limited-edition print for sale to members of the group and the public each year. Kansas State University's Friends of the Art started the gift print program in 1934 as a reward for members. The Friends of the Beach Museum of Art has continued the tradition and recognizes outstanding contemporary printmakers and photographers associated with Kansas. Among the artists who have earned the gift print artist title include William Dickerson, John Talleur, Margo Kren, Terry Evans, Dan Kirchhefer, Robert Sudlow and Yoonmi Nam. Since the 1990s this honor has also included an exhibition in conjunction with the release of the gift print edition.

For more information about the exhibition, contact Martha Scott at the Beach Museum of Art, 785-532-7718, or drop by the museum on the southeast corner of the K-State campus at 14th Street and Anderson Avenue. Free visitor parking is available next to the building. Museum admission is free; hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; and noon to 5 p.m. Sundays. The museum is closed on Mondays.

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