

A painting of a winter scene. In the foreground, a dog with brown, white, and black fur sits on a snowy bank, looking across a frozen stream. The stream is covered in snow and has a few small puddles. In the background, there are bare trees and a city skyline with buildings and a tall chimney stack. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting dusk or dawn. The overall style is impressionistic with visible brushstrokes.

JOE SARTOR

somebody's prayer

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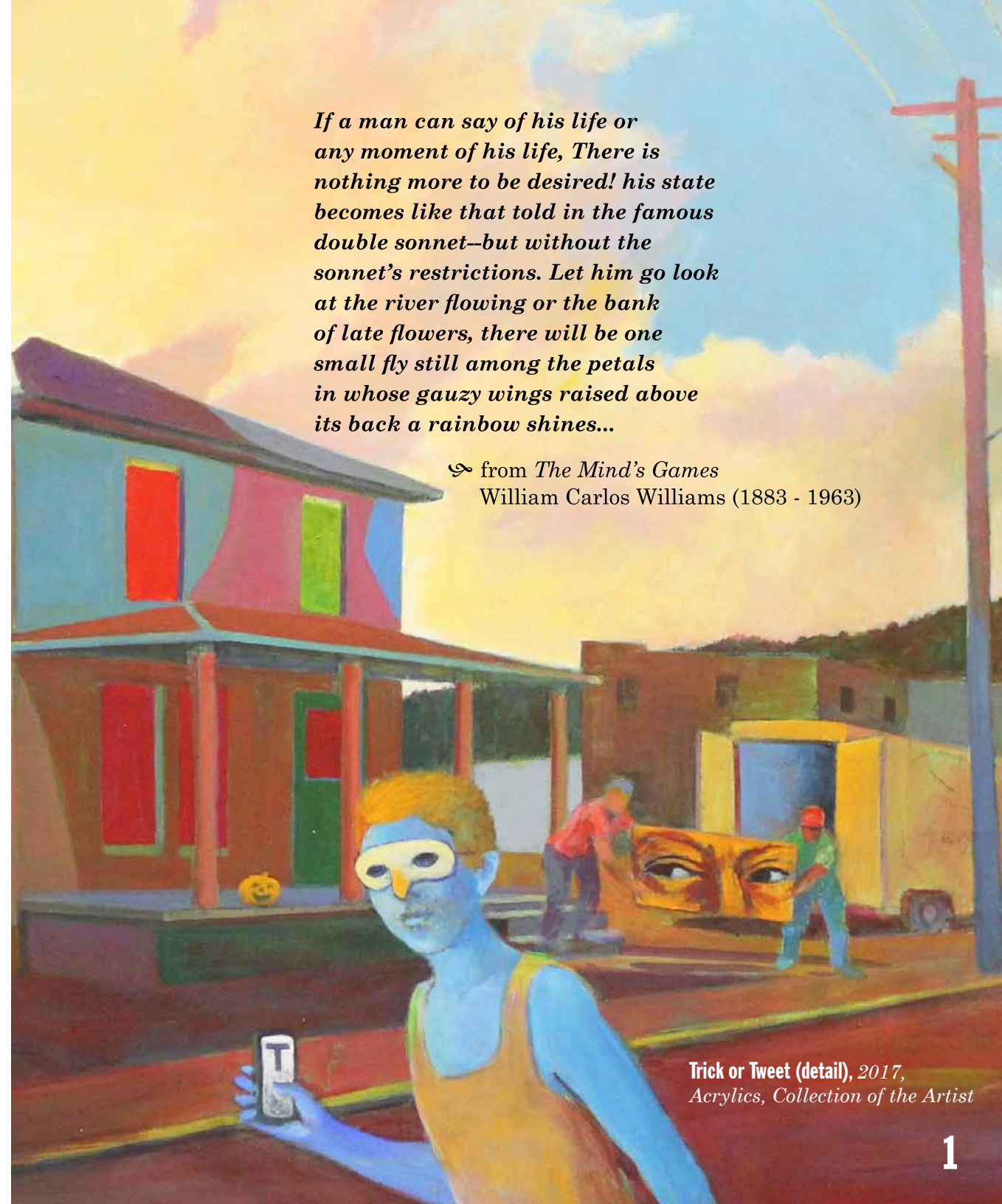
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Artist Statement: Joe Sartor

Cover Art: *Puddles*, Joe Sartor, 2011, Acrylics

If a man can say of his life or any moment of his life, There is nothing more to be desired! his state becomes like that told in the famous double sonnet—but without the sonnet's restrictions. Let him go look at the river flowing or the bank of late flowers, there will be one small fly still among the petals in whose gauzy wings raised above its back a rainbow shines...

∞ from *The Mind's Games*
William Carlos Williams (1883 - 1963)



Trick or Tweet (detail), 2017,
Acrylics, Collection of the Artist

MOREHEAD MIND GAMES

Joe Sartor has shown works here many times over the years when our museum presented open call exhibitions that included trained artists. I still remember the first time I saw his paintings. They were clever and controlled, but there was a vein of underlying tension running through them. They commanded my extended attention. I turned to our then curator, Adrian Swain, and asked, “What’s up with this guy?” Adrian merely replied, “Still waters run deep.” After I met Mr. Sartor, I understood what he meant.

Sartor was born in 1939 and raised in Fulton, Missouri, a small town located some 100 miles west of St. Louis. In 1962, he received his bachelor’s degree in Art from Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana. He enlisted in the Army after graduation and was stationed in Germany until he completed his service in 1965. He earned his M.A. in Art from the University of Missouri at Columbia in 1968. Afterwards, Sartor accepted a teaching position at Morehead State University, where he taught studio art until his retirement in 2000. He still lives in Morehead with his wife Nancy, and he is still painting actively. Since 2005, he has kept a studio at The Rowan County Art Center in the county’s historic courthouse building on Main Street.



The Red Ball, 2016, Acrylics, Collection of the Artist



Flashback, 1999, Oils, Collection of the Artist



www.HavingaNiceDay.calm, 2006, Acrylics, Collection of the Artist

During our decade of working together, Adrian Swain and I often discussed doing a solo exhibition of Joe Sartor's paintings, but other folk art projects kept delaying us. When Taral Thompson stepped into the role of curator following Adrian's retirement, she brought up the idea again and conducted the initial meetings with the artist. She and Mr. Sartor formulated the idea of an exhibition focused around his paintings inspired by the scenes, landscapes, and energy of this community. Even though Taral had to leave us due to university layoffs in the summer of 2016, the groundwork for the exhibition had been laid, and we are thrilled to present this fine exhibition of Joe Sartor's Morehead-themed works.

In my fourteen years at KFAC, we have never asked an artist to title an exhibition, but with Joe Sartor I did just that. His wit is not limited to the images he leaves on the canvas. The titles of his works are often clever word plays, which add new layers of meaning to his paintings. His exhibition title "Morehead Mind Games" is a perfect example of this. Is the artist playing mind games with the viewer? Is the town playing mind games with its residents? Are we all playing mind games with each other? After viewing Mr. Sartor's paintings, you may find that the answer to all three of those questions is likely "Yes."



Chickens on the Sunny Side, 2004, Acrylics, Collection of the Artist

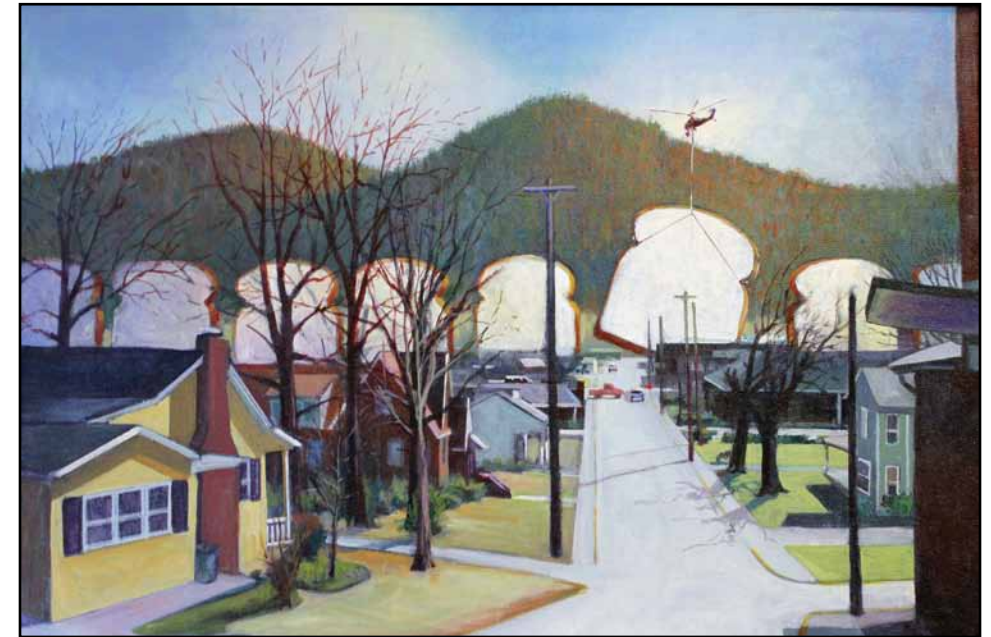
As a professor and working artist, Joe Sartor has painted hundreds of works during his career, and this exhibition should by no means be considered a retrospective. However, it does represent well the artist's incisiveness, creative vision, and technical skill. The four dozen works included in this show were painted between 1999 and the present day. As mentioned, residents or regular visitors to Morehead and Rowan County are likely to recognize many of the places and landscapes that are depicted. And, all viewers will be left to decipher the amused and often amusing messages in these paintings, even when there is weight behind the artist's punches.



Merry Paleo Poppings, 2007, Acrylics, Collection of the Artist

All of us live somewhere. And, artists often draw inspiration from their home communities, whether those communities are chosen by the artists or whether they were forced upon them by the circumstances of life. Joe Sartor does what each of us should try to do. He sees and depicts his home community with a sense new of wonder in painting after painting. Even if there is unease or heavy intent in some works, the Morehead, Kentucky of Joe Sartor's making is an extraordinary place where strange and astounding things are still possible. These paintings are real, and they are magical.

*✧ Matt Collinsworth
February, 2017*



Daily Bread, 2006, Acrylics, Collection of the Artist

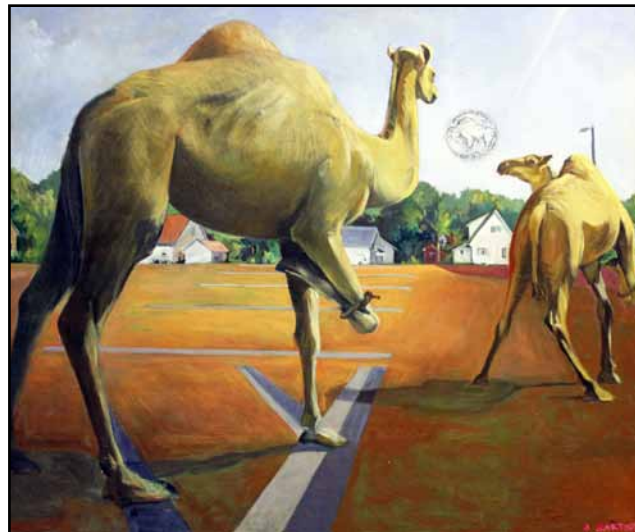
ARTIST STATEMENT

Morehead Mind Games is a visual salad of regional subject matter with a dressing of lite humor. Styles vary, but traditional pictorial organization prevails using familiar ingredients, including kinfolk, friends, pets, and the occasional politician. Personal photos, drawings, and musings meld to form colorful imagery.

Acrylic paint is my primary medium. Titles provide important insights to viewers and sometimes furnish incentives preceding the work itself. Composition and style evolve intuitively, complying with that which meets the eye and imagination to seek goal tenders wherever they may be found. The process is somewhat game-like, and I invite viewers to detect a sense of playfulness in my work, even when serious issues are possibly aloft.

Moreover, I would like for them to sense my fondness for Morehead, Kentucky, where, for better or worse, I have had the good fortune to live a good life for almost half a century, and worse does not seem to be on the horizon. For that I am grateful. It colors my thinking and makes me want to go paint it on the mountains.

✍ *Joe Sartor*
January, 2017



Global Wildlife, 2002, Oils, Collection of the Artist



To Be or Not To Be, 2017, Acrylics, Collection of the Artist

