



Sean Sexton, *Blood Writing*
November 1 – 30, 2010

*This is your life,
your storehouse of things –
the dust, dirt and mildew
your life attracts, on surfaces of the idle things
of your life.*

(Excerpt from the poem, “Your Life, Your Death” by Sean Sexton)

In conjunction with the Florida Literary Arts Coalition “Other Words” Conference and on the occasion of the recent release of his book of poetry entitled “Blood Writing,” the Crisp-Ellert Art Museum is proud to present a group of works by artist Sean Sexton. The exhibition will include paintings, drawings, etchings and ceramic objects as well as writings that span the past 25 years of the artist’s career. Sexton divides his time between painting, writing and taking care of his family’s 600-acre ranch near Vero Beach, Florida. These works contain images of the land, cattle, tools, fruit, vegetables, skulls and bones among others. Shown together they provide the viewer small glimpses into Sexton’s daily life and give a sense of his many years working in the Floridian landscape.



Sean Sexton, *Lament for Last Fruits*, 2001, Oil on canvas, Collection of the Artist

The artist often takes years to finish a painting in order to capture the effect of a certain time of day, or season. This is apparent in one of his large canvases, entitled “Spring Morning” that depicts a stand of palm trees. To the right we see a watering trough with cattle and in the distance a view of Sexton’s ranch. The artist successfully conveys the feeling of being in the crisp air on a spring morning as the sunlight filters through the trees; a sense of stillness pervades everything. In many of his paintings, Sexton takes his cue from the Hudson River School. But his works depart from the pastoral landscapes of artists such as Thomas Cole and Martin Johnson Heade, whose monumental paintings often comprised of many scenes put together to create one idealized vision. Rather, Sexton’s views are intimate and extremely personal.

Another common subject for Sexton are the objects that show up in his daily life, particularly in his studio where he spends so much of his time. In “Allegory



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of Work,” the artist has created an elaborate table setting of fruit, raw meat, animal skulls and tools of his trade such as barbed wire and part of a 60-year old fence-stretcher. These are Sexton’s “storehouse of things,” the bits of every day detritus that give us a window into his existence. Dutch still life painting from Northern Europe has clearly influenced the artist here, as he carries on the tradition of *vanitas*, in which the objects presented serve as both symbols for the pleasures of life as well as the certainty of death. If the appearance of fruits and vegetables speak of the abundance of the land in which he is so closely linked, the skull and bones must also be a symbol for death that is always close at hand, or “present every moment,” as he writes in the poem “*Your Life, Your Death.*”

These paintings will be displayed alongside prints, journals with his daily musings, and raku-fired ceramic pieces made after objects that have accumulated in the artist’s freezer over the years. Each work serves as inspiration for Sexton’s writing practice, and has a corresponding poem. Collectively, these works begin to tell us a story of the fullness of Sexton’s life as an artist, a writer and a rancher. His is a life that is full of hard work and labor, death and decay, but a life that also includes many quiet moments of beauty.

Sean Sexton lives and works in Vero Beach, Florida. He has been included in exhibitions at the Gulf Coast Museum of Art in Largo, Florida and Creadle School of Art in Winter Park, Florida, among others. His works can be found in the individual and museum collections throughout Florida, as well as at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois.

The museum is located at 48 Sevilla Street at Flagler College and open Monday through Friday, 10am to 4pm, while classes are in session.



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