

GREG THOMPSON FINE ART

Arkansas Democrat  Gazette

STYLE

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ARTBEAT

'Best of South' exhibit extended, works added



John Hartley's *Military Cycle* is part of "The Best of the South" exhibition at Greg Thompson Fine Art in North Little Rock.

KIRK MONTGOMERY

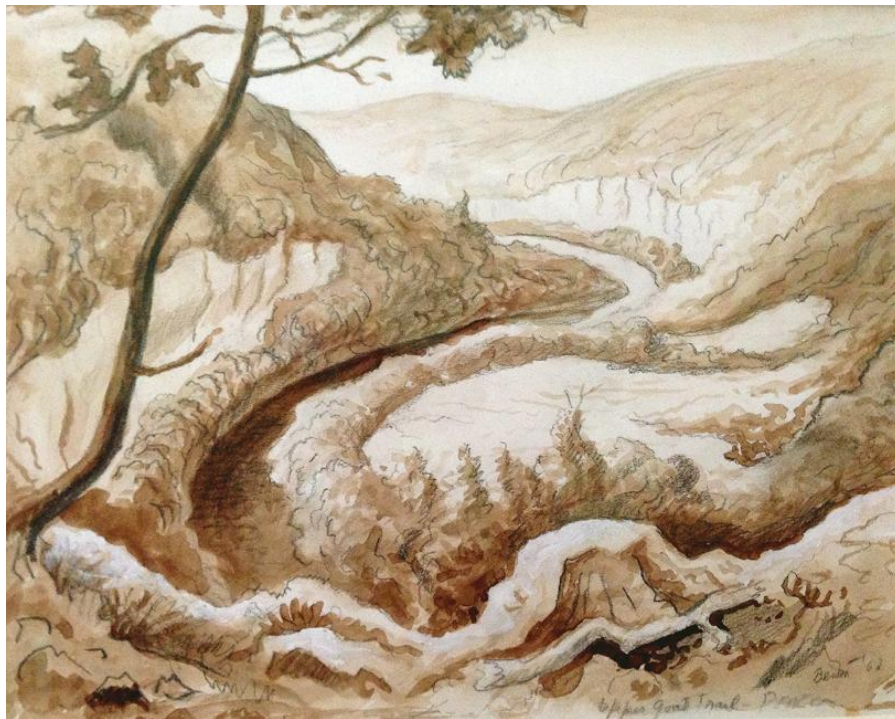
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Scale a stairway up into a bright, airy second-floor space at 429 Main St. in North Little Rock and you'll be treated to "The Best of the South," an exhibition at Greg Thompson Fine Art. The show, originally scheduled to close in July, has been expanded and will continue through Sept. 14.

Most of the artists in the earlier version of the show have new work hanging and artists Jerry Phillips and Taimur Cleary have been added to the mix.

Cleary's oils are representational, like most of the work on the show: Silos, barns, garages and the like, and the work is painterly and precise. In *Silo-June*, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock artist-in-residence showcases a sagging structure with delicate impasto, while the petite *September Morning* is a deft exercise in light and shadow falling across garage doors. Phillips' graphite works reside nearby.

The Picture Show by Daniel Blagg is a masterful watercolor on paper depicting the ruins of an old drive-in. Another of his works, *Ms. Wright's Chair*,



Thomas Hart Benton's *Buffalo River — Upper Goat Trail — Ponca* is a 1962 work of sepia, graphite and gouache on paper. It hangs at Greg Thompson Fine Art as part of the exhibition "The Best of the South."

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has strong overtones of Andrew Wyeth. The titular chair has been skillfully painted, and the Dallas artist revels in the grungy details of the old house.

Hyper-realism is also on display in the oil paintings of Fort Worth's John Hartley and Glennray Tutor of Oxford, Miss. Both artists focus their considerable talents on painting small, nostalgia-tinged objects: Hartley paints vintage items — often toys — with the seriousness of an old master and manipulates color with unusual skill. Tutor frequently depicts colorful marbles sitting serenely on top of old black-and-white romance comics. Hartley's *Military Cycle*, with its toy soldier perched atop a motorcycle, is a gem that showcases Hart-

ley's painting skill and expert color palette.

An oil painting by Little Rock native Kendall Stallings, *Listening for the Fall*, juxtaposes a man in a business suit against a forest; He stands on a mossy rock with his back to the viewer. It's as if Rene Magritte's man in a bowler hat has gotten lost (sans bowler), in the Arkansas woods. There is a casual looseness to Stallings' acrylic painting *64 Men* that is refreshing, and the men in 64 different poses are reminiscent of the contorted figures of the artist Robert Longo.

Sheila Cotton's *Drought* features a scarecrow outfitted in a bright red dress and moth-eaten hat in the middle of a cornfield. The Arkansas artist has other paintings from around the state in the show as well.

New Yorker Joe Piccillo has landed right in the middle

of "Best of the South" with a large, unframed canvas called #8. It is a mixed media work combining a World War II British Spitfire airplane with a pair of ballerinas. The message of the work is far from clear, but the sheer scale of the thing gives it presence. Another unstretched canvas by the artist can be found lying on the floor (intentionally) nearby.

There are other pleasures. For instance, *Delta Impression* is a beautiful blue-and-green acrylic landscape on paper by Henri Linton, and Ed Rice's symmetrical and straight-edged *Dormer With Mansard Roof* is an accomplished work of art.

"Best of the South," through Sept. 14, Greg Thompson Fine Art, 429 Main St., North Little Rock. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday. Info: (501) 664-2787; gregthompsonfineart.com