**Florida CraftArt,** 501 Central Ave., St. Petersburg, FL 33701

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**Florida CraftArt presents:**

***Ghost Stories***

**Exhibition Dates: September 1 to October 21, 2023**

What we fear can tell us much about ourselves. The 38 artists included in Florida CraftArt’s most recent exhibition, *Ghost Stories,* explore more than their own terrors but also offer images that reflect our collective anxieties and even fantastic views into worlds beyond our perception.

Catherine Bergmann,Curatorial Director of the Dunedin Fine Art Center, guest curated the show. “When I received the call from Florida CraftArt, I knew immediately the time was right for *Ghost Stories*.” She then posed the question, “Who doesn’t love a ghost, and who better to invite to the séance than a group of artists?”

Nick Reale approached the subject of ghosts in a highly personal manner. His wooden tableau, *Out of the Wood,* depicts two traditionally carved marionettes embattled in a tug-of-war between life and the afterlife. The imagery was born from his childhood fear of articulated puppets. However, the artwork takes on a deeper significance when he shares, "No other piece in my career has cut so close to the bone. The piece is about my experience trying to save my brother from his addiction." A carved wooden book, engraved with a poem Reale wrote to commemorate his brother, who died in 2003, completes the work with a sense of longing that makes his ghost story very real.

Janna Kennedy’s ghoulishly humorous *Ghostly Memories* looks as if it accidentally rolled into the gallery after taking a wrong turn in the afterlife. Although the skeletal remains of the rider are dressed in proper Victorian attire, her posture and the piles of paraphernalia that surround her suggest she is more of a peddler. Her ramshackle carriage, constructed from a Civil-War era wheelchair, is encrusted with framed photographs that attest to that time’s fascination with death. The vintage images include depictions of séances, double-exposed “spirit photographs,” and, most poignant of all, the post-mortem portraits commissioned by the departed’s loved ones. It all leaves the viewer wondering: Is the lady a charlatan, wanting to fool us into believing we can have some connection with the great beyond? Or is her sideshow a memento mori, reminding us not just of our own mortality, but of our evolving attitudes towards death?

From across the gallery, *Moth, Man, or Myth,* has the alluring presence of a woodlandfairy with wings unfurled. Upon closer inspection, one finds the figure’s composition is a macabre amalgam of human and mechanical elements. Artist Trent Manning is known for his expertly crafted sculptures made from salvaged items that come complete with implied storylines. Moths can symbolize change, transformation, and growth, while in various cultures, they are regarded as harbingers of death, bearing messages from the realm beyond. In this case, the title suggests the artist was inspired by the Mothman of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, an urban legend from the 1960s whose supposed sightings were accompanied by a tragic bridge collapse. It's the kind of eerie tale you'd expect to hear while sitting around a campfire, with the storyteller's face illuminated by a flashlight, enveloped by darkness.

Along with the exhibition, Florida CraftArt is partnering with two other organizations to present programming to complement the themes of *Ghost Stories.* Keep St. Pete Lit has challenged a group of local writers to pen ghost stories of their own inspired by the pieces found in the exhibition. The reading will be held at the gallery on October 5, at 6 p.m.

Preserve the Burg’s Executive Director, Manny Leto will share the tales of buildings that have vanished from the St. Pete landscape but continue to linger in our collective imagination.The presentation, *Ghost Buildings: Places That Haunt Our History*,will take place on Thursday, October 12, at 6 p.m.Pre-registration at FloridaCraftArt.org is highly encouraged and the suggested donation of $10 will be shared by the two organizations.

The exhibition was made possible with the generous sponsorship from Jeannine Hascall in honor of our fine craft artists.

The following artists are featured in the exhibition: Alegrobot, Demeree Barth, Karen Brown, Wendy Bruce, Joyce Curvin, Creative Clay, Coralette Damme, Katie Deits, Ed Derkevics, LA Finfinger, Eric Folsom, Janet Folsom, Mark Georgiades, Kristina Gintautiene, Erin Griffin, Cort Hartle, Judy Heady, Emma Hobbs, Pam Jones, Polly Johnson, Tyler Jones, Janna Kennedy, Traci Kegerreis, Betsy Lester, Cindy Linville, Richard Logan, Trent Manning, Francine Michel, Elizabeth Neily, Jacqueline Philp, Nick Reale. Shelly Steck Reale, Christine Renc-Carter, Jennifer Rosseter, Addie Rodriguez, Cooky Schock, Donna Slawsky, and Brandy Stark.

Florida CraftArt is located at 501 Central Avenue in St. Petersburg and is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, visit [www.FloridaCraftArt.org](http://www.FloridaCraftArt.org) or call (727) 821-7391. Florida CraftArt is a nonprofit organization founded in 1951 and headquartered in St. Petersburg. Its mission is to grow the statewide creative economy by engaging the community and advancing Florida’s fine craft artists and their work. Fine craft art is presented in its 2,500-square-foot Florida Artists’ Gallery, and curated exhibitions are featured in its adjacent Exhibition Gallery. Florida CraftArt is the *only* statewide organization offering artists a platform to show and sell their work.

CUTLINES

1. **Catherine Bergmann, Guest Curator of Ghost Stories Photo by Katie Deits.jpg**Catherine Bergmann was the Guest Curator of Ghost Stories which featured 38 artists from across the state of Florida.
2. **Nick Reale-FCA Ghost Stories Out of the Wood - Photo by Shelly Steck Reale.jpg**“Out of the Wood” by Nick Reale, is about the tug-of-war between life and the afterlife and also about trying to pull someone out of addiction.
3. **Janna Kennedy with sculpture FCA Ghost Stories Photo by Katie Deits.jpg**Artist Janna Kennedy poses with her assemblage of Victorian vintage pieces, including a Civil-War era wheelchair and skeleton.
4. **Janna Kennedy FCA Ghost Stories Photo by Katie Deits.jpg**“Ghostly Memories,” an assemblage of Victorian vintage photos, Civil-War era wheelchair and a skeleton, was created by Janna Kennedy.
5. **Trent Manning FCA Ghost Stories Photo by Katie Deits.jpg**Trent Manning was awarded Best of Show for “*Moth, Man, or Myth.”*
6. **FCA Ghost Stories Photo by Katie Deits.jpg**“Ghost Stories” is on exhibit through October 21 and is free to the public.