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PUBLIC INFORMATION

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**THE CITY OF CHARLESTON OFFICE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS PRESENTS**  
*Richard Hagerty: American Surrealist*  
**AT THE CITY GALLERY AT WATERFRONT PARK**

Charleston, SC - The City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs presents *Richard Hagerty: American Surrealist* at the City Gallery at Waterfront Park November 20, 2015 through January 10, 2016, featuring paintings by the recently retired, highly-respected local physician. The exhibition, curated by Roberta Sokolitz, will open with a reception on Thursday, November 19 from 5 to 7 p.m. In addition, the public is invited on Sunday, December 13 and again on Sunday, January 10 at 2 p.m. to visit the exhibition with the artist in attendance, as Hagerty shares insights and answers questions in a pair of artist's talks. All events are free and open to the public.

*Richard Hagerty: American Surrealist* is a major retrospective exhibition, presenting four decades of the artist's paintings exploring mythology, astronomy, anatomy, botany, history, philosophy, and world religions. This self-taught, prolific artist paints from a vast reservoir of dreams — his store of personal imagery suffused with the infinite memories, symbols, and archetypes of the collective unconscious. Hagerty, a recently retired, highly-regarded local surgeon, observes, "The style of surrealism is a visual language that allows me — a southerner by birth who is also formally trained in the rigors and disciplines of science — to explore and express my obsessions with deep history, fascination with myth and symbol, and inexhaustible curiosity about color and form."

Inspired by the boundless creativity of surrealism, Hagerty's art portrays the essential experiences and mysteries of life, mixed-up. As a medical student studying psychoanalysis and art, he began to sketch his dreams in pencil, pen and watercolors, creating wild Freudian scenarios, juxtapositions of biomorphic figures and forms, and introducing his menagerie of recurring self-portraits and other human and animal creatures. During the 1980s and '90s, he refined his style, intensified color and explored larger and more complex scenes and narratives. Around 2000, he turned to oils to create larger compositions, with even bolder color, contrasts and visual impact.

### About the Artist

Attenuated since childhood to the power of dream and myth, the notion of the shadow self, and the baroque imagery and iconography of the Catholic religion — with its overlay of threat and terror — in which he was raised, Richard Hagerty states that "painting, for me, is a language, a way to express the conflicts and complications of the psyche, both my own and those of the culture at large."

An early mentorship by the noted intellectual, feminist, and art historian, Laura Bragg (the first woman in the United States to head a public museum), had a seminal influence on Hagerty at a young age. Bragg — who held a salon in her Chalmers Street home in Charleston, South Carolina which Hagerty attended — had lived in Paris in the 1930s, collected art, and known such iconic figures as Gertrude

Stein and Alice B. Toklas. She introduced Hagerty to the powerful, disturbing paintings of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century Flemish painter, Heironymous Bosch, best known for his meticulously-painted, visionary scenes of hell and paradise.

Hagerty did not begin to paint until he entered Duke University Medical School, at which time he felt the need of balancing the right-brain rigors of intense medical training. Simultaneously, he became interested in the work of Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud, and psychoanalytic dream theory. Working initially on paper in watercolor and pen-and-ink, Hagerty rapidly established a unique and identifiable style. Curator Sokolitz has written, "Many of his works depict imaginative scenarios of fantastic figures and creatures which seem to float in shimmering landscapes of flowers, animals, and trees. Others feature urban or circus-related subjects or fanciful, airborne colonies of balloons, sunbursts, streamers and machine forms. A skilled colorist, Hagerty achieves a bold resonant effect...His use of clearly-defined form and strong patterning adds to the vibrant energy that characterizes his work."

Throughout his residency training in plastic surgery at Emory University in Atlanta, he continued to paint in watercolor. In recent years, Hagerty has added oil to his repertoire of media, and has begun to execute works, sometimes monumental in scale, on canvas. He tends to paint thematically, producing painting in clusters or series which address his multitudinous themes and interests, such as geometric forms, bullfighting, animal sacrifice, anatomy, philosophy, mythology, and astronomy, among many others.

A board-certified plastic surgeon, Hagerty has been the focus on a dozen solo shows and many group exhibitions while maintaining an active private practice in Charleston, South Carolina. He has a special interest in cleft lip and palate surgery, and travels overseas regularly as a volunteer to operate on indigent children who would otherwise not receive surgical care. An ardent conservationist, he is involved in the land conservation movement in several capacities. He and his wife, Barbara, have four children.

Evening Post Books recently published *American Surrealist: The Art of Richard Hagerty*, which features more than 250 works, including 175 color reproductions, black-and-white sketches, and uniquely-painted bones and found objects, which Hagerty has created over the past 40 years. The book, which includes an essay by exhibition curator Sokolitz and an interview with writer Gary Smith, will be available for sale at the City Gallery at Waterfront Park during the exhibition.

### **About the City Gallery at Waterfront Park**

*The City Gallery at Waterfront Park, owned by the City of Charleston and operated by the City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs, presents an annual program of exhibitions and events featuring the finest contemporary art from local, regional, national and international artists, stimulating discussion and dialogue among audiences. The City Gallery provides access to the visual arts for everyone in Charleston, SC, visitors and residents alike, by offering exhibits that are all admission-free. The City Gallery is located at 34 Prioleau St. in downtown Charleston, SC, and gallery hours of operation are Tuesday through Friday, 10 am until 6 pm, Saturday and Sunday, noon until 5 pm. Please call or check the gallery website for holiday closures weeks of 11/24, 12/22 and 12/29. For more information, visit [www.citygalleryatwaterfrontpark.com](http://www.citygalleryatwaterfrontpark.com).*

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