



The Humboldt Arts Council
in the Morris Graves Museum of Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Exhibition Headline: Stefano Cusumano: *The Evolution of A Style*

Exhibition Dates: January 28-March 16, 2008

Reception Date: First Saturday Night Arts Alive, February 2, 6 to 9 p.m.

Museum Hours: Wednesday - Sunday 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Although one can see the influence of Cezanne and Picasso on Stefano Cusumano's paintings his style and the journey it took over his 50 year career is uniquely his own. Stefano Cusumano was born in Florida in 1912 and his work came of age in New York City at the dawning of Modernism and Abstract Expressionism when pivotal changes were occurring. A self-taught artist and teacher, Cusumano's work is caught between tradition and the modern world and through the shift of delineated planes, lines and angles, and the dramatic use of color we see evidence of the evolution of his style, a style both embracing and rejecting direct influence of the two movements. His subject matter remains constant throughout his career—family and strangers, the scenery and his environment, objects of the natural world and of daily life—yet his style evolves, the progression perfectly illustrated in his self-portraits, still lifes, landscapes and figurative works.

The Evolution of A Style chronicles Cusumano's major stylistic modifications over the course of his career through the familiar themes he chose to focus on. Perhaps one of the defining transitional periods for him was during the 1940's and early 1950's when, as one of the early participants in the New York School of painting, he attended the first meetings and helped to ready the groups' Greenwich Village meeting hall where he would participate in heated philosophical discussions with William De Kooning, Franz Kline, Peter Agostini, and others. The common denominator of his body of work is structural integrity—the planning and study of the support and form underneath the subject of his paintings. In the 30's he produced mostly still lifes and self-portraits, many done in deep, vibrant hues. Between the 40's and 50's his palette includes more subtle shades; the colors begin to lighten, and the focus shifts to include figures and landscapes. Through the next decade the palette remains light, paired with contrasting colors and tighter brushwork. Beginning in the late 60's the canvases become almost monochromatic and surreal, showcasing his skill in draftsmanship. It was at this time Cusumano said of his previous styles, "...I always felt a need, a searching for a change. I don't think I will need to look further." He worked in this manner until his death in 1975.

It is unique to find an artist whose transitional periods are well defined and successful in their own right. Even more rare is the artist who achieves what their muse pushes them toward through all the years of transformation...an aesthetic that allows full creative expression while

simultaneously demonstrating mastery of the craft. Stefano Cusumano is that rare artist whose work radiates beauty, originality, quiet power and timelessness.

Cusumano's changing style influenced countless students during his years of teaching at Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and New York University. His paintings have been part of numerous exhibitions throughout the United States and have been included in many prestigious publications. As part of Gian-Carlo Menotti's Pulitzer prize-winning musical drama "The Consul," Cusumano produced drawings and paintings that were used for the cover of the printed score and for advertising purposes. His works are in many private and public collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, The National Gallery in Washington D.C., and the National Museum of American Art in Washington D.C.

A prominent figure in 20th Century visual art, Stefano Cusumano's style progression and the influence it had on his students, his colleagues and the art movement of the time is a great achievement. The Humboldt Arts Council is pleased to have the opportunity to showcase the work of such a significant painter as Stefano Cusumano.

The Morris Graves Museum of Art, located at 636 F Street, Eureka is open to the public noon-5p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. Museum admission is by donation: \$4 for adults, \$1 for seniors age 55 and older; HAC Members and children age 12 and under are admitted free. Admission is always free for everyone during each First Saturday Arts Alive!, 6-9 p.m.

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