



Acadiana Center
for the Arts

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Acadiana Center for the Arts' Main Gallery Exhibition Features Large Scale Steel Sculptures Celebrating Musical & Artistic Improvisation



LAFAYETTE, LA - September 1, 2023 - Acadiana Center for the Arts announces its next main gallery exhibition Martin Payton: Legacy of Form—featuring large scale steel sculptures that celebrate musical and artistic improvisation.

Martin Payton (b.1948, New Orleans) comes from a family of accomplished New Orleanian musicians and holds at the core of his artistic practice the styles of improvisation and African Polyrythms embedded in New Orleans Jazz. Payton's sculptures resemble silhouettes suggestive of traditional African forms with a minimalist, modern personality.



Payton considers this act of composition to be similar to “drawing with steel” and considers himself an artist practicing in the lineage of ancient African blacksmiths. The symbolism and spiritualism of this African tradition is present in all of his works.

Using found materials gathered at the scrap yard, Payton composes sculptures of juxtaposition and improvisation that are the artist’s visual equivalent of improvisational Jazz. Payton's approach to this composition involves pulling and placing alternating options until he finds the right relation between parts, once found, then setting the form in place.

AcA’s Visual Arts Director & Curator, Jaik Faulk, says, “By encountering his artwork as viewers, we come to understand much in the histories of viewing and traditions of forms in the lineage of African sculpture. I would remind viewers that by circling and viewing each piece in the round we too are walking and absorbing the plethora of views and joys of form the artist has experienced and adjusted, shaped, and arranged. Imagine that path.”

Martin Payton served as Professor of Art at Xavier University, New Orleans, and Southern University, Baton Rouge before retiring in 2011. Through his long career at Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), Payton has been a mentor to thousands of currently practicing artists from the American South.

Since his retirement, Payton has continued to flourish as a sage artist with large museum exhibitions including the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, the LSU Museum of Art, Ohr O’Keefe Museum and a recent solo exhibition at Arthur Roger Gallery in New Orleans.

Martin Payton: Legacy of Form marks the artist’s only major showing in Lafayette since 2004.

The exhibition will open to the public in the AcA Main Gallery from September 9, 2023 and be on view through January 13, 2024.

About AcA

As the community’s leader in arts and culture, the Acadiana Center for the Arts (AcA) serves to bring elevating arts experiences to the people of Acadiana through many approaches including holding public concerts, presenting art exhibitions, providing grants to artists and cultural organizations, and bringing artists into schools across the region.

As the regional arts council, the AcA envisions an Acadiana that thrives because people from all walks of life are inspired to participate in a dynamic cultural life where everyone can feel that they belong.