



Steffen Thomas
German- American 1906 – 1990

STEFFEN THOMAS was born in 1906 in Fürth, Germany. By age 14 he showed talent as a sculptor and was apprenticed to a stone carver, and by 16, his level of accomplishment allowed him part time work sculpting WWI monuments. He attended the School of Applied Arts in Nurnberg for two years, followed by four years at the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich. There he established himself as a sculptor of note, was granted a studio and awarded "Master" status at the age of 21.

Infatuated by 'the American Dream', Thomas left for America at age 22 and found a job in Palm Beach, Florida, copying classical sculptures for the E.F. Hutton Estate (now Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club.) After a return visit to Germany, he lived briefly in Alabama before settling in Atlanta in 1930. Here he quickly gained recognition for his talent and made a living as a full time artist doing bust commissions of influential people, public art projects, and exhibitions; including at the Telfair Academy, Savannah; The High Museum, Atlanta; The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., and St. John's Museum of Art (now Cameron Art Museum) in Wilmington, NC. His work is featured in numerous institutional collections and, subsequent to his death, has been shown in several dedicated exhibitions around the country and in five retrospective museum shows.

Thomas married Sara Douglass in 1933, becoming a citizen in 1935. In 1941 he bought acreage in Stone Mountain, Georgia, and built a home, studio and bronze casting foundry. Here, he created some of his greatest public sculptures; the monumental statue of Governor Eugene Talmadge, on the grounds of the Georgia State Capitol in Atlanta, and the Alabama Memorial, located in the Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi. From 1955 onward, he followed his muse and created personal Expressionist art. It is this work that forms the basis for his continuing legacy as an artist; displaying the depth of his originality, exuberant creativity and experimentation with different mediums. Thomas was a truth-seeker with a high level of inspiration and his work reflects a recurring humanist theme of "the brotherhood of man."

In 1973 Thomas retired to midtown Atlanta, working from a studio in his home until his death in 1990. The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art in Buckhead, GA commemorating the artist's life and work opened in 1997, fulfilling Sara Douglass Thomas's dream to see a museum dedicated to her husband.

The museum is open to the public. www.steffenthomas.org

Public Collections; Awards and Exhibitions; 1920's - Present

1920's

- Glaspalast (Glass Palace), Munich, invited to exhibit his sculpture many times

- Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, Award of Excellence for Laboré, a sculpture of a mother and children

1930's

- Alabama College (Univ. of Montevallo), Montevallo, AL, Dr. O. C. Carmichael, bust
- Auburn University, Auburn, AL, Gov. Bibb Graves, bust
- University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, Dr. George Denny, bust
- University of Georgia School of Journalism, Athens, GA, Henry Grady, bust
- Emory University Law School, Atlanta, Judge John S. Candler, bronze bust
- Atlanta Public Library, Atlanta, Dr. Wallace Sutton, bust
- Georgia State Capitol Rotunda, Atlanta, Moina Michael, The Poppy Lady, marble bust
- Berry College Museum Collection, Rome, GA, Martha Berry, marble bust
- Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, AL, George Washington Carver, bronze bust
- Piedmont Park Collection, Atlanta, Pioneer Women, bronze plaque
- High Museum, Atlanta, exhibition
- University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland, Crawford W. Long, bronze plaque

1940's

- National Youth Administration, Georgia, Plow Boy and Youth, monumental plaster sculptures
- Georgia State College for Women, Milledgeville, GA, Chief Justice Richard B. Russell, bronze bust
- State Capitol Building, Atlanta, US Senator Hoke Smith, bronze plaque
- University of Georgia, Athens, GA, Chancellor Charles M. Snelling, bronze bust
- University of Georgia Sanford Stadium, Athens, GA, Chancellor S. V. Sanford, bronze bust
- Scottish Rite Hospital, Decatur, GA, Dr. Michael Hoke, bronze plaque
- State Capitol Building, Atlanta, Charles H. Herty, bronze bust
- Atlanta University, Atlanta, Dr. John Hope, bronze bust
- Young Harris College, North Georgia, Dr. Joseph A. Sharp, bronze bust
- Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Joel Chandler Harris, bronze plaque
- Agnes Scott, Decatur, GA, Miss Nanette Hopkins, white marble bust
- Georgia Military Academy, College Park, GA, Col. And Mrs. Woodward, bronze busts
- State Capitol Grounds, Atlanta, Eugene Tallmadge Memorial, colossal bronze sculpture

1950's

- Vicksburg National Military Park, Vicksburg, MS, Alabama Memorial, bronze on granite base
- Vicksburg National Military Park, Vicksburg, MS, General John Forney, colossal bronze
- Alabama State Capitol, Montgomery, AL, Alabama Memorial, bronze scale model
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, Henry Lineberger, bronze bust
- Courthouse, Vienna, GA, Senator Walter F. George, bronze bust
- Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC, exhibited
- High Museum, Atlanta, Southeastern Art Show, exhibited
- Sculptor's Society, NYC, exhibited
- Fulton National Bank Lobby, Atlanta, Robert Fulton, Fulton Steamboat, and Atlanta City Hall, cast aluminum murals
- West Point Military Academy Collection, West Point, NY, Class of 1915 Monument
- State Capitol Building, Atlanta, Governor John M. Slaton, bronze bust

1960's

- Emory University, Atlanta, exhibition
- Jens Rison, Decorative Arts Center, Atlanta, exhibition
- High Museum of Art Permanent Collection, Atlanta, St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio, bronze

1970's

- Lord and Taylor Art Gallery, Atlanta, exhibition
- Agnes Scott College Permanent Collection, Decatur, GA, Mother and Child, over life size marble, selection of small sculptures and paintings
- Fulton County Roswell Library Grounds, Roswell, GA, Reclining Madonna and Child, marble sculpture

- Callanwolde Arts Center Permanent Collection, Atlanta, Bird of Prey, limestone carving; Girl on a Motorcycle, limestone carving; and selected paintings
- Dodd Art Center Permanent Collection, LaGrange College, LaGrange, GA, selected paintings, drawings, and prints
- Ty Cobb Museum Permanent Collection, Royston, GA, Ty Cobb, drawing
- Museum of Arts and Sciences Collection, Macon, GA, selected sculptures, paintings and drawings
- Museum of Arts and Sciences, Macon, GA, exhibition
- City of Atlanta Collection and Urban Design Award, Trilon, welded copper fountain sculpture
- Warm Springs Hospital Campus, Warm Springs, GA, FDR, monumental concrete head
- Museum of the City of Mobile Permanent Collection, Mobile, AL, Alabama Memorial, plaster model
- St. Johns Museum of Art, Wilmington, NC, exhibition

1980's

- St. Johns Museum of Art, Wilmington, NC, Freedom of the Figure, traveling exhibition
- Bryant Galleries, New Orleans and Jackson, MS, exhibitions
- St. Johns Museum of Art Permanent Collection (now Cameron Art Museum), Wilmington, NC, selected works
- Albany Museum of Art Permanent Collection, Albany, GA, Sowing the Seeds, painting
- Southern Company, Steffen Thomas selected as feature artist for a national ad campaign
- Gwinnett Council for the Arts Permanent Collection (Hudgens Center for the Arts), Duluth, GA, selected sculpture and paintings
- Georgia Governor's Award in the Arts, for lifetime achievement in the arts

1990's

- Gwinnett Fine Arts Center (Hudgens Center for the Arts), Duluth, GA, exhibition
- Hudgens Center for the Arts Sculpture Garden, Duluth, GA, St. Francis and the Wolf of Gubbio, welded copper
- Steffen Thomas Museum of Art, Buckhead, GA, established by Sara Douglass Thomas
- Publication of Art of Steffen Thomas, by Alan Aiches and Anthony Janson, catalogue for traveling exhibition.
- Broome Street Gallery, NYC, Art of Steffen Thomas, exhibition
- SCAD, Savannah, GA, exhibition

2000's

- Lauren Rodgers Museum, Laurel, MS, Art of Steffen Thomas, exhibition
- Museum of Arts and Sciences, Macon, GA, exhibition
- Hudgens Center for the Arts, Duluth, GA, exhibition

2010's

- Steffen Thomas Museum of Art, Buckhead, GA, series of exhibitions curated by Andrew and Hathia Hayes
- Madison-Morgan Cultural Center, Madison, GA, 'Scapes, exhibition
- Plaza Arts Center, Eatonton, GA, exhibition
- Harrison Center for the Arts, Athens Academy, Athens, GA, exhibition
- Publication of Steffen Thomas: Rediscovered, published by Ogden Museum of Southern Art, essays by Alan Aiches, Andrew and Hathia Hayes, Anthony Janson, and Robert Ware, edited by Andrew and Hathia Hayes, catalogue for traveling exhibition
- Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans, LA, Steffen Thomas: Rediscovered, exhibition
- The Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, GA, Steffen Thomas: Rediscovered, exhibition
- 2017 TEW Galleries Salon Show, Atlanta, GA
- 2017 Steffen Thomas, A Legacy in Atlanta. City Sponsored exhibition & panel discussion on the artist's public art legacy in Georgia. Followed by, on August 24th, the Steffen Thomas Museum's 20th Anniversary exhibition.

Biography

- 1906
- Fürth, Bavaria, Germany, born on January 7, 1906
- 1920 - 1923
- Fürth, Bavaria, Germany, Apprenticed as stone carver - sculptor
- 1924
- School of Applied Arts, Nürnberg, Germany (Nuremberg), completed courses in Drawing and Sculpture under the tutelage of Professors Widmer and Rumelin.
- 1925 - 1928
- Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, Germany, studied Classical Sculpture with Professors Herman Hahn, Joseph Wackerle, and Bernhard Bleeker
 - Munich Technical School and University of Munich Medical School, studied architecture and anatomy
 - Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, Germany, awarded Master Student status and a Certificate of Recognition in 1927.
 - Munich, Germany, Glaspalast (Glass Palace), exhibited regularly and won awards for sculpture, when his art was displayed with works by Modern Art Masters, such as Van Gogh, Matisse, Picasso, and Munch
- 1928
- Came to the USA to work as a sculptor on Mar-a-Lago, the Palm Beach estate of E. F. Hutton and Marjorie Merriweather Post. (Estate now owned by Donald Trump, who operates it as the Mar-a-Lago Club)
- 1929
- Returned to Germany briefly, and then came back to USA to establish himself as a sculptor.
 - Completed several portrait commissions in Alabama
- 1930
- Opened his first professional studio in Atlanta, GA, established himself as a sculptor, and began receiving commissions for public sculpture.
- 1933
- Married Sara Douglass, a City of Atlanta school teacher.
- 1935
- Became an American Citizen
- 1939-1941
- National Youth Administration (NYA), under the WPA in Georgia, art supervisor
- 1941-1972
- Moved from Atlanta to Stone Mountain, GA, raised four children, built large studio, house and sculpture garden
 - Completed many public sculptures, several on monumental scale
 - By mid 1950's began devoting himself to creative art, working in many media
- 1973-1989
- Moved with his wife Sara back to Atlanta
 - Continued to work on a smaller scale in sculpture, painting, drawing and printmaking
- 1990
- Died on January 27, 1990