

# Soulful

## sounds and scenes



Susanne Fredericq talks about one of the abstract works of her late husband and artist Eugene James Martin during the recent WAMA Café Night which also featured an evening of soul food classics, champagne and jazz.

RECORD/Valerie Winn

# WAMA Café Night salutes African-American artists

By VALERIE WINN  
Arts Editor

More than 50 people attended the Walter Anderson Museum of Art's recent Café Night, which featured a sneak preview of an upcoming exhibition seasoned by the sounds of jazz legends and generous helpings of a gumbo-like mixture of shrimp and grits.

The event, which highlighted the works of multi-media visual artist Eugene James Martin, along with the recorded sounds of trumpeter Miles Davis, also commemorated African-Americans who have contributed to the arts. Suzanne Fredericq, wife of the late Martin, was on hand to talk about the drawings and paintings of her husband.

"I fell in love with the drawings before I met him," she said. "You can see from the pieces what a wonderful person he was. He was a true artist."

Fredericq, a native of Belgium and an associate professor of biology at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, also stressed the work ethic of Martin.

"He had a lot of discipline," she said. "I have stacks and stacks. I have hundreds of his works."

As guests watched a video about Martin and browsed through a scrap book of his art, Fredericq mingled among them, answering questions and telling stories about her husband.

"The important thing for him was the creative act," she said. "He never repeated himself. He never knew when he painted or drew, what would come out. It was very exciting. But he knew when to stop."

She also talked about her husband's sense of humor.

"People like his titles more than the works," she said with a smile and pointed to one of his



RECORD/Valerie Winn

Joseph Melton of Gulfport and Joyce Nelson of Moss Point share a conversation about artist Eugene Martin as they look through a book of his works.

more whimsical drawings which melded the shapes of birds and is titled, "I am not a Mockingbird."

Joseph Melton, a former resident of New Orleans who now lives in Gulfport, was enthralled by Martin's work, noting that he'd seen the artist's works in New Orleans.

Moss Point resident Joyce Nelson, who works for the Jackson County Civic Action Committee, said that she hopes to use examples of Martin's art to inspire the children she works with.

"I hope to use his art to make

the children smile," she said.

Martin's works of art can be found in numerous private art collections throughout the world as well as in several museums including the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans, the Munich Museum of Modern Art in Germany, the Arthur Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York and the Walter O. Evans Collection of African American Art in Savannah, Ga.

His work will be exhibited at WAMA later this year.

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— SUSANNE FREDERICQ  
about her late husband,  
Eugene James Martin