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THOMAS WELLS

Roy LaGrone adjusts one of his prints, "Ship's Log No. 5240 (Sharecropper Reflections)," which will be on display at the GumTree Museum of Art. The piece digitally combines discarded objects and other elements with a photo he took of a Mississippi cotton field.

Hometown artist's debut opens Friday

■ Roy LaGrone uses computers to combine photos and found objects.

BY M. SCOTT MORRIS

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TUPELO—After a summer of renovations, the GumTree Museum of Art will re-open with an exhibit from a native son.

Roy LaGrone Jr., a 1984 Tupelo High School graduate, lives in Sacile, a town in northern Italy. From there, he shipped 18 pieces of his work to Tupelo for his first hometown exhibit.

He uses computer software to combine objects like shells, hair rollers and bottle caps with pictures he's photographed in Mississippi, Italy and beyond to create prints that give the appearance of three dimensions.

"I call it the 'Beauty of the Impossible,'" LaGrone said. "I'm always trying to construct things you can't easily make by hand.

His work has been shown at the Smithsonian Institution, the Contem-

For art's sake

■ **What:** "The Beauty of the Impossible," an exhibit by Roy LaGrone

■ **When:** Friday to Sept. 20

■ **Where:** GumTree Museum of Art, Tupelo

■ **Info:** gumtreemuseum.com, (662) 844-2787

844-2787

■ **Extra:** There will be a free opening reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, and LaGrone will give a gallery talk at 7 p.m.

porary Arts Center in New Orleans and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum in Austin.

The Tupelo debut had been scheduled for the spring, but the renovations at the museum didn't start until May. The museum's first renovations in 23 years included about \$150,000 worth of changes. Heating and air conditioning work, lighting and alarm systems and new windows are all in the plans.

A few months later, there's a fresh

paint job, and LaGrone's work will be the first to hang on the museum's new acoustic wall coverings.

"Our goal was to be done by the end of July so we could be ready for the show on Aug. 1," said Tina Lutz, museum director. "We're excited to have Roy here. We really wanted to have the building ready for his debut."

He's the son of Roy LaGrone Sr. and Delores LaGrone. One of the pieces on display combines a seashell with a photo of his mother's Tupelo beauty salon. It's called "Transporter Terminal D (Tribute to Delores LaGrone)."

He said his work is a "playful way to deal with personal reflections and, at the same time, universalize them for the public."

LaGrone has shown his work across the U.S. and abroad, but he's not sure what to expect during the opening reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday.

"I'm at home where people know me," he said. "I'm at home, and I'm naked with the work."