



## GumTree Museum of Art

Text and Photography by C. Richard Cotton

The photographic imagery of Roy LaGrone drew plenty of attention during its mid-August opening at the GumTree Museum of Art. Of course, it helped that LaGrone is a Tupelo native, now living in Italy, whose work is garnering considerable interest in the art community.

Besides family members beaming with pride at their relative's accomplishments, the gallery floor filled with friends and art-loving admirers of LaGrone's work, shown in his "The Beauty of the Impossible" exhibit. Drawn in by the beautiful complexity, they stared carefully at the dozens of pictures created from, well, pictures.

LaGrone says his work blends "found" items – bottle caps, bits

Roy LaGrone, exhibiting artist beside his work: (Right) Ship's Log 5240 (Sharecropper Reflections) at Tupelo's GumTree Museum of Art.



Tupelo Artist Guild Gallery, the building's art mission began with its opening in 1985.

Since then, Lutz explains that numerous changes have taken place. Among them is the name change, when the gallery combined art appreciation efforts with the Gum Tree Festival, which also changed its name, to Cellular South GumTree Festival, when the mobile phone service provided sponsorship.

"We were originally a non-collecting gallery to bring museum-quality exhibitions," says Lutz. That changed with its festival collaboration; each year the Best in Show Purchase Award is added to the museum's collection, which

now numbers about 125 pieces.

Phase 1 of the GumTree's renovation is coming to an end. It comprised repainting, new air conditioning system, new doors and restoring the building's upper windows, funded along with the museum's other efforts by grants, sponsorships and private contributions. Another phase, undertaken partially by museum employee Tanner Coleman, includes improving some storage space and re-novation of the kitchen and restrooms.

"We couldn't do this without help from the E.R. Carpenter Foundation, Renasant Bank and our board chairman, Peggy Oakes," says Lutz. ■

**GumTree Museum of Art**  
211 W. Main St. Tupelo  
662.844.2787  
Free Admission  
10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues.-Sat.

**EXHIBITIONS**  
Through Sept. 20 – "The Beauty of the Impossible," by Roy LaGrone

Oct. 1-Nov. 10 – Mississippi Art Colony Traveling Exhibition

Dec. 30-Feb. 26, 2009 -- American Masters of the Mississippi Gulf Coast

(Opposite page) A crowd enjoys the opening of Roy LaGrone's GumTree showing.

(Below) Roy LaGrone and Tina Lutz, executive director of the GumTree Museum of Art, pose for photographs during the recent opening.

