**PRESS RELEASE**

Union Hall Gallery

Presents

“Postcards to Andy”

from

Mel Smothers

October 9 – 25, 2010

**The Union Hall Gallery** is pleased to announce its latest exhibition, “Postcards to Andy”, featuring the paintings of artist Mel Smothers. Emily O’Leary, curator of the Judaica Museum in NYC, says “Smothers adopts the postcard format in his compositions, with each work personally addressed to Andy Warhol. Beginning “Dear Andy…,” each piece incorporates Warholian images in order to establish a posthumous dialogue with the iconic pop artist.

Smothers integrates text into his paintings, following in the tradition of such artists as Vincent van Gogh and Charles Marion Russell, the 19th century landscape painter of the American West, both of whom combined drawings and text in their personal correspondence. Smothers juxtaposes word and image to express his connection to Warhol’s work. After Warhol’s estate in Montauk, NY was sold in 2006, Smothers, a nature lover, visited the sprawling 5.6-acre oceanfront property on the eastern tip of Long Island, in his words, ‘to get a sense of the place.’ During that time, he was struck by the contrast between the natural environment and Warhol’s mass produced pop art images. In response, he began making postcard-style paintings to ‘report back’ on the things he saw in Montauk.

The compositions feature some of Warhol’s most recognizable images, including portraits of celebrities such as Elizabeth Taylor, Marlon Brando, and Marilyn Monroe, and the unmistakable Campbell’s soup cans. Organic subjects which normally appear in a natural setting, such as flowers, fish, bird life, and even inanimate objects that might be found washed up on the beach, dominate the faintly rendered pop art images. The result is a compelling body of work that juxtaposes two disparate subjects: the world of pop culture which Warhol embraced, and Smothers’ observations of the natural world. Thus, a dialogue is established. “

Smothers’ recent June 2010 group show at the Brooklyn (NY) Artist’s Gym (BAG) entitled “Beyond Warhol in the 21st Century” brought favorable reviews from “New York Post” art critic Meredith Deliso where Mel was quoted on 6/7/10, “On the East Coast, there’s the phenomena of the artist who doesn’t even do his own paintings,” said Smothers. “I really love painting, and that’s my dialogue with Andy Warhol: Is the pop artist just a machine? Or is pop art really about painting? The BAG show’s Chicago curator Bob Furman stated, “For us, the compelling images Smothers conjures up are more collaboration than dialogue - - echoing particularly Warhol’s later collaborative pieces with Jean-Michel Basquiat, who brought a raw and romanticized exprerssionist spirit to Warhol’s purposefully staid, commercialized pop imagery.”

SacBee art critic Victoria Dalkey wrote in a 7/99 article, “Smothers , who for many years did California landscapes reminiscent of the work of his teacher Wayne Thiebaud, departs into a more symbolic realm n his new large scale paintings which are richly textured and layered with paint, resin, epoxy and charcoal incorporating multiple images. These works point to an interesting new direction for Smothers.” The book “Conscious Reader,” noted that “Mel Smothers began his series by observing how many painters in the past – including Lichtenstein, Matisse, Max Ernst, and Dali – have acknowledged influences and included them in their work.”

A graduate of California State University and the University of Idaho, Smothers relocated from California to the East Coast in 2004 to pursue his career in New York City. His work has been exhibited in both solo and group shows throughout the United States as well as in public art and multi-media projects and the performing arts.

The opening reception for the “Postcards to Andy” show will be held on Second Saturday, October 9, 2010 from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. The Union Hall Gallery is located at 2126 K Street, Sacramento, CA. Other than Second Saturday receptions, gallery hours are by appointment with groups preferred. Call (916) 448-2452 for an appointment.