

M Gallery of Fine Art SE LLC

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STRENGTH AND GRACE Michelle Dunaway Solo Exhibition

On Display from September 2, 2011 – September 30, 2011

CHARLESTON, SC (September 2011)- M Gallery of Fine Art is pleased to present a solo exhibition featuring the work of Michelle Dunaway. The show, entitled *Strength and Grace*, will hang from September 2nd – September 30th. The show will include approximately 23 pieces, ranging from smaller *alla prima* studies and drawings to larger studio works, portraits and still lifes. The opening reception will be held on Friday, September 2nd, in tandem with the First Friday Art Walk.

Dunaway believes that every aspect of creation contains a balance of strength and grace. Strength, according to Dunaway, is that which we are able to bring about through our determination and perseverance, while grace takes care of whatever is beyond our control. "I believe that sometimes the greatest act of courage and strength is to trust that Grace is there even when we can't see or feel it...to persevere and continue to hope." The paintings and drawings in the show represent Dunaway's explorations of these aspects and moments where she has felt the elements of strength and grace come together.

The title piece for the show *Strength and Grace*, actually came to Dunaway in a dream. She woke up one morning with the vision of her cousin Justyne wrapped in her grandmother's handmade quilt. The painting is of a girl "on brink of womanhood wrapped in the creative gifts of the woman who came before her," explains Dunaway. In

the painting, strength seems particularly visible in the young girl's eyes, while grace is represented by the grandmother's loving spirit that is implied through the quilt.

Michelle Dunaway was raised in Alaska, where her artistically inclined mother encouraged her to draw at a young age, and her father took her on frequent nature walks. "Nature has also always and continues to be a constant source of inspiration...I remember as a child being fascinated with the smallest nuances, the way a leaf curls and changes colors uniquely, the way the color of the light and time of day seems to infuse an emotional aspect into a moment or place, the way the environment affects the person in it, these things constantly fascinate me as an artist," says Dunaway.

As a teenager, Dunaway lived in New Mexico, where she studied at Art Masters with Lou Maestas. She went on to attend Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, where she studied with Steve Huston, among others. In her mid-20s Dunaway was exposed to the likes of John Singer Sargent, Cecilia Beaux and Jules-Bastien Lepage. During this time, she also attended workshops Jeremy Lipking and Morgan Weistling. More recently she taught at California Art Institute in Westlake Village and at the Lost Angeles Academy of Figurative Art. She now lives in New Mexico. Dunaway was featured in *Southwest Art* magazine's "21 under 31" as one of 21 emerging fine artists in the US.

"There's nothing as exciting and honest as painting from life to me," Dunaway admits. "To paint with the person or subject directly in front of you, well, there is a communication going on... it is a shared moment and is alive and filled with truth." To Dunaway, it is the expression of honesty that makes a good painting. She believes that to be honest, you must stay true to the inspiration that first draws you to paint a particular subject. With that in mind, she attempts to simplify everything else that is superfluous to that initial inspiration.

Dunaway currently lives in New Mexico.

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For more information on this topic, email Carlen Quinn at cquinn@mgalleryoffineart.com or call 843.727.4500.