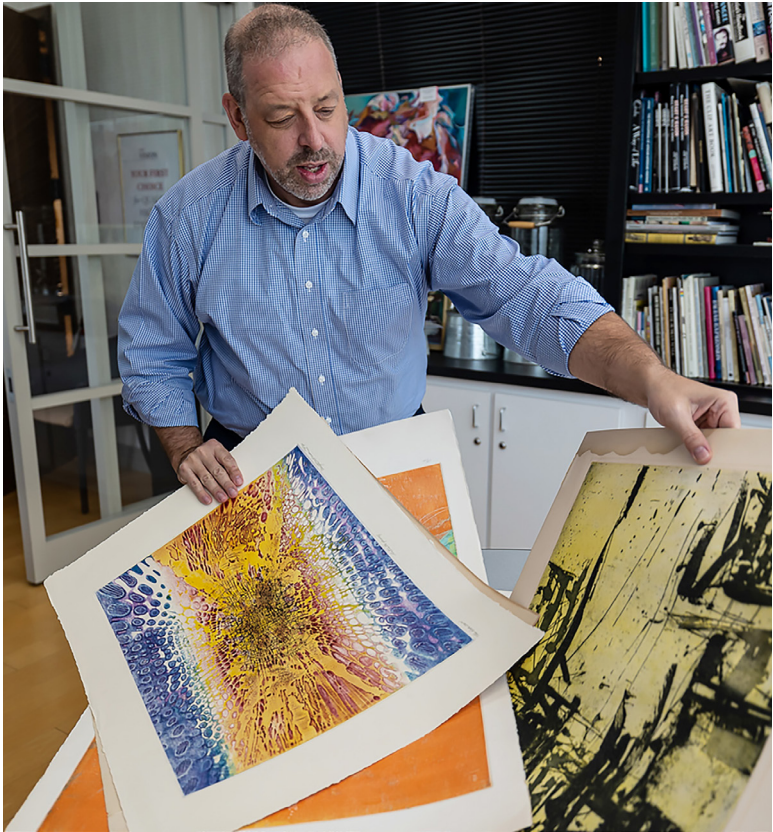


People, Places & Things

Tyrus Clutter's labor of love



Tyrus Clutter looks through some art prints during his 2021 exhibit “Greater Than 17: The Art and Influence of Stanley Hayter and Atelier 17” at the College of Central Florida Webber Gallery. [File photo by Meagan Gumpert]

By Julie Garisto
julie@magnoliamediaco.com

Tyrus Clutter’s current labor of love, in more ways than one, began with a passion for printmaking and an ardent admiration of the 20th-century artists who elevated the medium to new heights.

Clutter, if you’re new to the area, is a renowned Ocala-based artist and College of Central Florida (CF) instructor. A painter and illustrator, Clutter began exploring the fine art techniques of printmaking while he attended grad school at Bowling Green University.

“The gallery director at the time said, ‘I have this really big project that no one has undertaken, which is cataloging our whole collection,’ which was linked to 3,000 pieces,” Clutter reminisced about his Bowling Green experience.

“A lot of that was printmaking. It was in drawers and stuff. ... I had never done that before, so that was a big undertaking on its own. But that’s when I first started coming across some of the artists who had worked at Atelier 17.”

Since that fateful job, Clutter has been creating and collecting Atelier 17 artists’ prints. More recently, he has taught aspects of the underappreciated medium to his CF students and has made it his personal mission to keep alive the legacy of Atelier 17, the iconic birthplace of experimental printmaking.

To that end, Clutter is taking a break from exhibiting his own work this year to research the artists who forever changed printmaking. This time though, he’s delving into an area of research that so far has been uncharted territory: the love lives of Atelier 17 artists.

It all starts with one artist: Stanley William Hayter (1901-1988). Hayter pioneered the vanguard departures of printmaking, inspired by the etchings of poet and artist William Blake. After studying chemistry and contracting malaria while working for the oil company that would become British Petroleum (BP), Hayter opened the famed Atelier 17 in Paris in 1927. The studio relocated to New York during World War II; the no. 17 comes from its first street address pre-Nazi invasion.

Visionary and unconstrained, Hayter traveled the world and instilled in his peers and acolytes a spirit of discovery while engraving and coloring prints. The British artist’s spirit of adventure and technical skill inspired Clutter as an artist and collector. Last year, Clutter exhibited Hayter prints from his collection at CF’s Webber Gallery and the Leepa-Rattner Museum of Art in Tarpon Springs.

Though he didn’t call himself a surrealist, Hayter created imagery that took root in surrealism. His atelier was a hotspot in the 1920s artist/expatriate scene. Over the years, the studio brimmed with famous artists: Salvador Dali, Marc Chagall, Joan Miro, Alexander Calder, Pablo Picasso, Mark Rothko and many others. Abraham Rattner, the namesake of the Tarpon Springs museum, was also among Hayter’s circle of friends and collaborators.

In those close quarters, romantic relationships formed and the stories have been mostly apocryphal. As one would imagine when discussing a charismatic artist, Hayter had several lovers. But the cliches don’t necessarily ring true

The reputed artist and CF instructor is on a mission to make history by documenting the romances of artists who worked at the iconic Atelier 17.

for this complex persona.

“People kind of thought that, after reading some publications that had been out at different times, Hayter was a bit of a womanizer,” Clutter explained. “With his being married three times, I guess you could see how that might come across to people. But I don’t think that’s completely accurate. There was some stuff going on both sides with some people. He might have been married three times, but I think some of the women he was with, some very strong women, had equally as strong personalities.”

Clutter has been researching Hayter’s love life as well as the relationships of his contemporaries, including Krishna Reddy and Judy Blum, Fred and Jean Morrison Becker, and a handful of others, including one secret couple yet to be revealed. Clutter is still researching it before he reveals the juicy details. (You can learn the lovers’ stories by finding “The Couples of Atelier 17” on Clutter’s YouTube page.)

His recent acquisitions include a greeting card created collaboratively by Hayter and his second wife, Helen Phillips.

“For decades, Hayter was doing these greeting cards that he would send out to maybe a hundred different people,” Clutter said. “One year he and his second wife worked on the cards together. ... It’s just interesting to see the artistic collaboration as well as the collaboration in their lives.”

The projects and passions that smoldered within the smoke-stained walls of the atelier have inspired Clutter to embark the major project that will document the personal lives of the educated and vivacious Atelier 17 artists.

“The plan is for a traveling exhibition for 2027, the centenary of the group’s founding, and hopefully a book,” Clutter explained. “I’ve been meeting with the still living artists, now in their 80s and 90s, in New York City, and going through archives to find old correspondence that shows the relationships between all these folks. Then I am off to London and France for more of the same.”

Clutter’s research and travel expenses have been crowdfunded so far. As of this writing, he has raised \$10,502. (To contribute, visit bit.ly/3X26518.)

Clutter shared that the Marion Cultural Alliance gave him a grant for his research from their 4 Friends Grant fund and he presented a workshop titled ‘L’Atelier de l’amour’ on June 14 at the Brick City Center for the Arts.

An artist of renown in his own right, Clutter has been a College of Central Florida associate professor since 2010. He was born in Michigan and holds a bachelor’s degree in art from Spring Arbor University and an MFA in painting from Bowling Green State University. His award-winning work has been exhibited in numerous group and solo exhibitions throughout North America and in some European galleries.

And what would Clutter want art historians to say about his love life?

“Oh, well that is kind of nonexistent,” he said. “Between teaching, making art, and studying art I’ve never had time to pursue much else. Maybe that is a subconscious aspect of the research: I get to live vicariously through the people I’m studying.”

Learn more about Clutter and his Atelier 17 project at tyrusclutter.com.



A greeting card co-created by Stanley William Hayter co-created with wife Helen Phillips in 1955.

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“Le Couple”
by Stanley William Hayter, 1952.