



Greenville County **Museum of Art**

420 College Street Greenville, SC 29601
864.271.7570
gcma.org

News Release

CONTACT: Paula Angermeier 864.271.7570, ext.1028 pangermeier@gcma.org

Greenville, SC-- Born in North Carolina to Black sharecroppers, Thomas Sills (1914 – 2000) steered an unconventional course to achieve success as an artist in New York. When he was only 11, he traveled by train from Raleigh to Harlem, where he stayed with an older brother. Over the years he worked several odd jobs, including theater doorman, church custodian, stevedore, and liquor deliveryman.

It was in a Greenwich Village liquor store that Sills met mosaic artist, Jeanne Reynal. The two became friends and later married, and Reynal introduced Sills to her circle of friends and colleagues, who included the artists Elaine and Willem de Kooning, David Hare, Mark Rothko, and critic Harold Rosenberg. An avid collector as well as artist, Reynal acquired works by Max Ernst, the de Koonings, and Marcel Duchamp, among others. As Sills remarked, **“With paintings and artists all around me, it didn’t take very long before I got stirred up to doing my own work. . . . I wanted to go my own way from the very beginning.”**

Sills' first solo exhibition was held at Betty Parsons Gallery in May 1955. He experimented with color and form his entire career, inspired by the spontaneity of Surrealism, the direct paint manipulation of Abstract Expressionism, and the experimentation with optics and forms of Color Field Abstraction. His final solo exhibition was in 1980.

Reluctant to be categorized in any way, Sills commented, **“If somebody told me that I had to paint this way or that I had to do that . . . I wouldn’t want it. . . . You like it or you don’t like it, but I am doing what I want.”**

Sills' work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, all New York; along with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Greenville County Museum of Art.

The Greenville County Museum of Art is located in the center of downtown Greenville’s cultural campus, Heritage Green, at 420 College Street. The GCMA is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 am until 5 pm and on Sundays from 1 pm until 5 pm. Admission is free.

To learn more, visit gcma.org/see

-end-