**Coulter/Szmagaj In Conversation**

**JMU Emeriti: Jerry Coulter and Kenneth Szmagaj**

**May 03 – June 23, 2018**

**Artist Reception: May 07, 2018, 5-7p**

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**SUMMER HOURS**

May 03 – June 23, 2018: Wednesday – Saturday / 12-3 p
June 24 – September 09, 2018 / CLOSED

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**Harrisonburg, VA** – Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art at James Madison University welcomes two emeriti professors of art, Jerry Coulter and Ken Szmagaj, for a two-person exhibition, **Coulter/ Szmagaj: In Conversation**. The exhibition will be on view from May 03 – June 23, 2018, with an Artist Reception on Monday, 07 May 2018 from 5-7p. The exhibition will also be open from 5-8p on Downtown First Fridays: May 04 and June 01.

This exciting two-person exhibition takes a look at the similarities and differences between abstract and figurative painting. While observing contrasting pieces side by side, the viewer is asked to explore the complexities of different ways of seeing and painting while interpreting meaning through the use of pure form and unconscious gestures. Coulter and Szmagaj ask the viewer to consider a variety of chain reactions from the visual to all of our other senses and receptors. The gallery space comes together in a series of conversations — in groupings on the wall and across the room — and ask the viewer to go beyond ordinary explanations and unravel the extraordinary.

Jerry Coulter’s paintings exhibit a distinctive style. The use of the human figure as an expressive form reflects his many years of teaching figure drawing and painting. His non-objective paintings are inspired by the use of pure form as the expression of emotion independent of subject matter. Coulter says of his work, "I have always been interested in the expressive potential of the human form and how to use that form to get the expression in the painting as opposed to letting the figure merely stand for or symbolize something. That is why I generally work with figurative and non-objective imagery at the same time." These seemingly disjointed subjects come together to create moments that piece together time within elements of the day-to-day life of an artist.

Ken Szmagaj plays with space and the special moments when unconscious gestures appear and create meaning. "In works composed from studio detritus, found objects and pieces from disassembled works, I improvise, looking for ways to make connections between the incidental, unrelated and fragmentary. I work with them until they yield a glimpse of something that is beyond their materiality. Rhythm and gesture are a means to create opportunity, continuity and sense of place." These playful poetic glimpses of pure honesty come together to symbolize a tempo of beauty in such a chaotic time.

Together, Coulter and Szmagaj represent the best possibilities within James Madison University’s School of Art, Design and Art History. At our best we are a body of visual thinkers and makers, carving out a humble space in our halls and studios of learning. These two very different painters shine a light on what is possible.

Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art aims to present the highest level of fine art experiences, to create an active space for robust discourse of vital issues facing our society, and to be a visionary leader of fine art for all.