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**ELLA SHARP MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY  
ACQUIRES “MEMORIAL” BY PHILIP C. CURTIS**

**Jackson, MI** – The Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History has acquired “Memorial”, an oil on panel by Jackson native Philip C. Curtis which will be unveiled on October 1, 2006. This acquisition, which will be installed in a new donor lounge, will be accompanied by a Secret Sound DVD installation featuring *Philip C. Curtis: An American Original*. This installation is made possible by a grant award to the Museum by The Philip C. Curtis Charitable Trust for the Encouragement of Art.



*Memorial by Philip C. Curtis, 1984*

## **Philip C. Curtis**

Born in Jackson, Michigan on May 26, 1907, Philip C. Curtis was the son of a lawyer and musical parents. He graduated from Jackson High School in 1926.

As a teenager, Curtis fell through the ice on Vandercook Lake and as a result of the accident developed rheumatoid arthritis which kept him from active duty in World War II and later necessitated a permanent relocation to Arizona.

In 1930, Curtis received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Albion College and entered the University of Michigan School of Law. He eventually took another four-year degree from the School of Fine Arts at Yale University in 1935.

After school, Curtis accepted a position with President Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration's Federal Arts Project in New York, as did many young artists during the Great Depression. In 1936, the WPA charged Curtis with establishing the first art center in the state of Arizona. He founded the Phoenix Art Center which eventually became the Phoenix Art Museum in 1959.

In 1941, Curtis enrolled in the museum studies program at Harvard University but left to serve with the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. He returned to Phoenix in 1947 to resume his career as an artist.

Curtis' self-acknowledged relationship with Surrealism has been amended by some in describing his work as "Surrealism with hope", not giving way to despair or black humor. He draws from both classical and modern art but when asked about his early influences Curtis mentioned Piero della Francesca and the Sears and Roebuck catalogue.

In 1979 at an exhibit of his work at the Ella Sharp Museum in Jackson, Curtis said "My paintings are what I have to say. I don't know how I would explain one of my paintings. I would have to take a month off."

Performers and props such as chairs, roses and musical instruments, appear often in his work. The desert also plays a major role in Curtis paintings. Curtis was quoted as saying, "I use the desert for landscaping because I like the feeling of space."

Curtis painted on masonite board instead of canvas because he wanted a smooth surface for his technique.

In 1991, Albion College celebrated the inauguration of the Philip C. Curtis Visiting Artist Program which continues to this day.

This enigmatic artist died in 2000 at 93 years of age.