



Fifty Years on Sonoma Mountain

Paintings and sculpture by Robert McChesney and Mary Fuller

June 14 - August 2, 2009
Petaluma Arts Center
230 Lakeville Street, Petaluma

Mary Fuller and Robert McChesney arrived in Petaluma in 1952. Together with friends, they built a house and studios atop Sonoma Mountain. In the decades following, they each pursued their art which can be found today in museums, galleries and libraries throughout the country.

Robert McChesney was born in Marshall, Missouri in 1913 and moved to California in 1936. He attended Otis Arts Institute in Los Angeles and went on to work in the mural division of the WPA in San Francisco from 1938 to 1940. He taught at the California School of Fine Arts and is considered one of the leading figures of American Modernism. His abstract paintings have been exhibited nationally in the Whitney Museum of American Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Art Institute of Chicago. The landscape of the American West was always his inspiration. "My paintings are made of these things: a walk through the oak and bay forests of Sonoma Mountain, the light of the sun reflected off the vernal pools, the colors of the sunset." Robert "Mac" McChesney died on May 10, 2008 at the age of 95. His life and art are chronicled in *Robert McChesney: An American Painter*.

Mary Fuller has been carving giant totems and goddesses for nearly 50 years. Her artwork embodies numerous sources—Native American, Pre-Columbian, African, ancient matriarchal cultures—and like the sacred totems of the Pacific Northwest coastal tribes, honors her ancestral ties to family, both animal and human. Her cast concrete sculpture has been exhibited all over the world and her commissioned pieces grace public spaces throughout California. Petaluma children know her genial lions in the public library and visitors to the local animal shelter are greeted by her Lady of the Beasts. She is also the author of a key documentary work in the field of modern California art history, *A Period of Exploration. San Francisco 1945-1950* (Oakland Museum, 1973).