

THE COMMONWEALTH AWARDS

IN THE ARTS,

HUMANITIES

AND

INTERPRETIVE SCIENCES



CELEBRATING
THE UNCOMMON WEALTH
OF MASSACHUSETTS
MARCH 28, 2001

AWARD RECIPIENTS



ARTIST



RICHARD YARDE

Richard Yarde has been a signal presence in the New England art world since the mid-1960s. He has trained generations of young artists at a succession of colleges and universities, and has been Professor of Art at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst since 1990. His own work

has enriched our sensibilities as he charted a unique watercolor style. Solo and group exhibitions throughout the country have featured his paintings, which reside permanently in nearly three dozen public collections, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Yarde tackles the traditionally intimate art of watercolor with uncharacteristic bravado. Unlike oil or acrylic painting, watercolor brooks no mistakes. Yet Yarde paints on an heroic scale with dazzling color, rich symbols and deeply evocative imagery.

Critics have written – and Yarde concurs – that his body of work has been an exploration of his own history. Early on, he painted with joy and verve. He would splash the Roxbury neighborhood where he grew up in the 1950s on large sheets of paper, then turn to rendering imagined scenes from the vibrant jazz world of the Harlem Renaissance.

Catastrophic illness in 1991 sidelined Yarde for a year, with symptoms that included a loss of touch and impaired movement. "As soon as I could," he has said, "I turned to my work again. I was literally trying to heal myself through my process of working and imagery." Yarde's will to create again led to a powerful series of work that confronted his illness and our common mortality, a transformation of the artist from autobiographer to poet of the human condition.

2001 COMMONWEALTH AWARDS



2001



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