

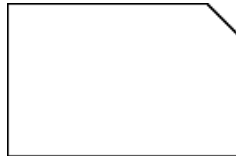
The Weekly Challenger

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John Scott's I Remember Birmingham At The Museum Of Fine Arts

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John Scott, I Remember Birmingham
By: John Scott
(1940-2007)

ST. PETERSBURG - This technically innovative and spiritually moving installation is John Scott's response to the tragic church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama on

September 15, 1963. Four girls lost their lives that Sunday morning at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. This dark day occurred just three weeks after the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

John Scott's I Remember Birmingham (1997), on view through February 23, is a memorial and ritual piece. It provides a quiet place for people to gather and reflect.

"I Remember Birmingham is one of the most important contemporary works in our collection," said MFA Director Kent Lydecker. "It reveals the deep humanity and powerful poetic insight of a distinguished artist, John Scott. We hope that many people will come to our museum to experience this extraordinary installation."

He produced I Remember Birmingham at Graphicstudio, the respected collaborative institute at the University of South Florida, Tampa that creates fine art editions. His installation commemorates African-American History Month at the MFA.

One of Louisiana's towering artists, Scott was a master of many media: sculpture, painting, drawing, prints, and installations. His 2005 retrospective at the New Orleans Museum of Art, Circle Dance: The Art of John T. Scott, featured nearly 200 works and attracted art-lovers and scholars from around the country. An "art world" event, it ended up being especially poignant, as Hurricane Katrina struck the city one month after the closing and Scott would pass away from pulmonary fibrosis just two years later.

Scott's art has been shown at many other leading museums, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum; the Detroit Institute of Arts; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Dallas Museum of Art; and the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo.

In 1995, his work was selected for an exhibition of twentieth-century American sculpture at the White House and was chosen for the inaugural exhibition of the sculpture garden at the Studio Museum in Harlem. He received a fellowship from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, often referred to as the "genius grant," in 1992.

Scott spent nearly his entire life in his beloved New Orleans, which he called "the only city that I've been in, that, if you listen, the sidewalks will speak to you." He only left to earn his M.F.A. from Michigan State University. He returned to teach at his alma mater, Xavier University, a historically black, Catholic college, which he credited with changing his life. Even when he was able to live

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independently as an artist, he continued to teach at Xavier. Mentoring young people, especially African-Americans, was a lifelong commitment and part of his noble legacy.

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg is fortunate to have I Remember Birmingham in the collection, an acquisition made possible with funds provided by The Stuart Society, the MFA's dedicated fund-raising auxiliary. Chief Curator Jennifer Hardin and Fran Risser, President of The Stuart Society during the 1998-1999 season, selected this incredible installation for the collection.

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