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Sign Painters Exhibit Celebrates History of Maryland Tradition
Hand-lettered street and business signs were norm before computers

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND – The Baltimore Museum of Industry (BMI) will present a new exhibit beginning April 3 on the rich history of Maryland’s sign painters. *NOT YET LOST! The Art of Maryland Sign Painters* will run through January 3, 2016. The exhibition is guest-curated by Samantha Redles as her thesis for her Master of Fine Art in Curatorial Practice at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA).

The exhibit highlights local sign painters who have transformed Maryland’s visual landscape. *NOT YET LOST! The Art of Maryland Sign Painters* examines the art of hand-lettered signs through the work of individual artists. Most of the objects and art displayed are on loan from private collectors and the featured artists. The exhibition is an opportunity to experience rare photographs, artifacts, memorabilia, and original artwork. The exhibit examines the processes behind different types of hand-lettering and humanizes this commercial form.

Redles’ thesis reflects on a time before computers when sign painting dominated advertising. Trained craftsmen carefully painted all of the traffic signs, storefront signs, billboards, large advertisements, and more. One artist that *NOT YET LOST!* features is Clifford Olson who spent 50 years painting wall signs in Baltimore; some of Olson’s signs were three-dimensional. He constructed and painted iconic signs like McCormick & Co.’s vanilla and pepper cans that sat on top of their headquarters in downtown Baltimore. All of the featured artists in Redles’ exhibition have decades of experience and extensive portfolios reflecting their masterful skills such as boat lettering, gilding glass and reverse window painting.

“Traditionally, sign painting is a commercial art. Its practitioners are held to the expectations and requirements of the businesses that hire them. They are artists who hold a very specific set of skills and knowledge that is passed from master to apprentice. Hand-lettering bridges gaps between craft, fine art, and design,” says Redles.

The exhibition will run through January 3, 2016.

This exhibit is made possible in part by support from Gable Signs.

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ABOUT THE BMI:

Founded in 1977 as a project of the Mayor's Office, the Baltimore Museum of Industry is a private, nonprofit organization established to celebrate the past, present and future innovations of Maryland industry and its people through dynamic educational experiences. The Museum is a leader in innovative education about Maryland industry and a major attraction for Baltimore, Maryland, and the Mid-Atlantic region.

VISITOR INFORMATION:

The Baltimore Museum of Industry is located at 1415 Key Highway, Inner Harbor South, Baltimore, MD 21230. The BMI is open Tuesday – Sunday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., and closed Mondays and certain holidays. Free on-site parking is available. Admission prices, general museum information and directions can be found at www.thebmi.org. Follow us on Facebook and on Twitter at @BMlatWork.

ABOUT THE MARYLAND INSTITUTE COLLEGE OF ART:

Founded in 1826, Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) is the oldest continuously degree-granting college of art and design in the nation. The College enrolls nearly 3,500 undergraduate, graduate and continuing studies students from 48 states and 61 countries in fine arts, design, electronic media, art education, liberal arts, and professional studies degree and non-credit programs. Redefining art and design education, MICA is pioneering interdisciplinary approaches to innovation, research, and community and social engagement. Alumni and programming reach around the globe, even as MICA remains a cultural cornerstone in the Baltimore/Washington region, hosting hundreds of exhibitions and events annually by students, faculty and other established artists.

ABOUT THE CURATORIAL PRACTICE MFA PROGRAM:

MICA's Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Curatorial Practice prepares students to take a responsible approach to the expanding role curators play in creating a vibrant cultural life in the 21st century's global society. Designed to forge connections among art, artists, and the community, the program's collaborative and individual curatorial projects allow students to explore new methods of exhibition presentation—thinking outside of traditional models and training to create relevant, timely, and accessible exhibitions for their audiences. New models include considering the surrounding community or history of the venue as inspiration when organizing exhibitions. This innovative graduate program is the first MFA in Curatorial Practice in the United States.