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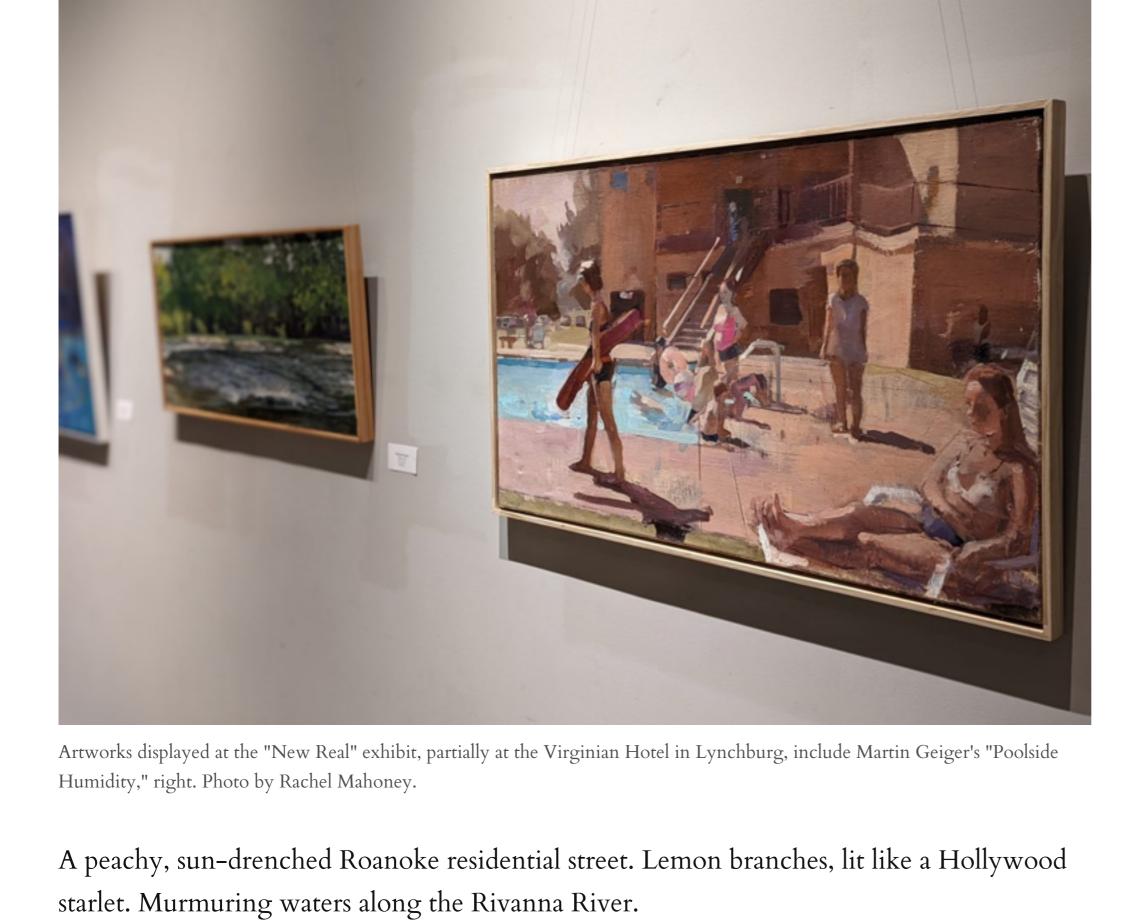
## Lynchburg exhibit reunites an artistic community in Virginia Many prominent artists, from a region bound by Lynchburg and Roanoke north to Charlottesville and Staunton, are featured in the show, which runs

My account

through February.



by Rachel Mahoney



All are captured in paintings displayed in a two-location exhibition in Lynchburg, and

besides a thread of contemporary realist style, there's something else connecting them: decades of vision cultivated by a community of artists in Central Virginia.

Dubbed "New Real" by gallery owner Steven Coates, the exhibit lays some familiar-feeling

Virginia scenes among vibrant still lifes and striking symbolism. Having opened up shop in the Wyndhurst neighborhood of Lynchburg about three years ago, Coates said his gallery was taking on a contemporary realist tone and he was pulled to bring together this particular cadre of artists in a show.

Almost every piece feels tangible and vibrant, like a memory. Coates said that the style is well-suited for an audience that's experienced an overarching ennui over the past few years, between the pandemic and other factors.

should resonate with people who are "looking at what's around them with different eyes and seeking out meaning" in the wake of all that, he said. Bill White, one of 18 contributing artists, said the show brings to mind a quote from Henri Matisse about wanting art to feel like

a comfy armchair.

The accessible, yet evocative imagery

scattered through the south central swath of Virginia decades ago. Many of those artists were connected from area colleges and universities — White was a professor at Hollins University for almost 40 years.



It made for an energizing, albeit not quite competitive, environment where he and the others held a sympathy for each other's work, provided feedback and visited shows, he said.

That support system flourished amid special tours and events, galleries, museums and spaces for artists dotted across the region.



You're getting all your sauces and your ingredients right. ... We're not naming things, we're just reading purely visual information."

a really good common thread for all of us," she said.

create significant work, just as they were 40 years ago.

"It's a circle of friends and family, basically," he said.

representation," he said.

unanimous support.

With ever-present inspiration from the region's varied landscapes, White said their work finds life beyond just realistic representations, inviting the viewer on a deeper dive into its familiar subject matter. That contingency of Porter admirers is well-represented in the exhibit, Glover said, along with a few fresh faces she told Coates he must include.

"Many of us have watched each other's work develop throughout the years, and that's been

White said it's important that the old guard be joined by new names in the exhibit. And for

some of the established artists, it's a chance to remind patrons that they're continuing to

"It's the opposite in the larger art world; it's hard for older artists to get gallery

"This is right brain painting," she said. "It's really using the mise en place that chefs use.

Coates said it was a need to be fulfilled. He noted those artists are of a "great generation" who experienced turbulent changes of the '60s and '70s and are now seeing similar trends

and changes. To bring their work together felt natural, and he said the idea was met with

Also among the exhibit's artists are Frank Hobbs and Rosalie White of Staunton's Beverly

Street Studio School, as well as University of Virginia-connected painters Philip Geiger,

Richard Crozier and Lincoln Perry, whose murals enliven the walls of Old Cabell Hall.

Perry's new book, "Seeing Like an Artist," was cause for a special reception scheduled for 6

from the book and signing copies. A second reception at 5 p.m. Saturday will take place at

p.m. Thursday at the Virginian Hotel in downtown Lynchburg, where he'll be reading

Both Glover and White said it's an esteemed honor to be among so much talent. Glover

added that such an exhibit of painterly realism is unprecedented and Coates is a fearless

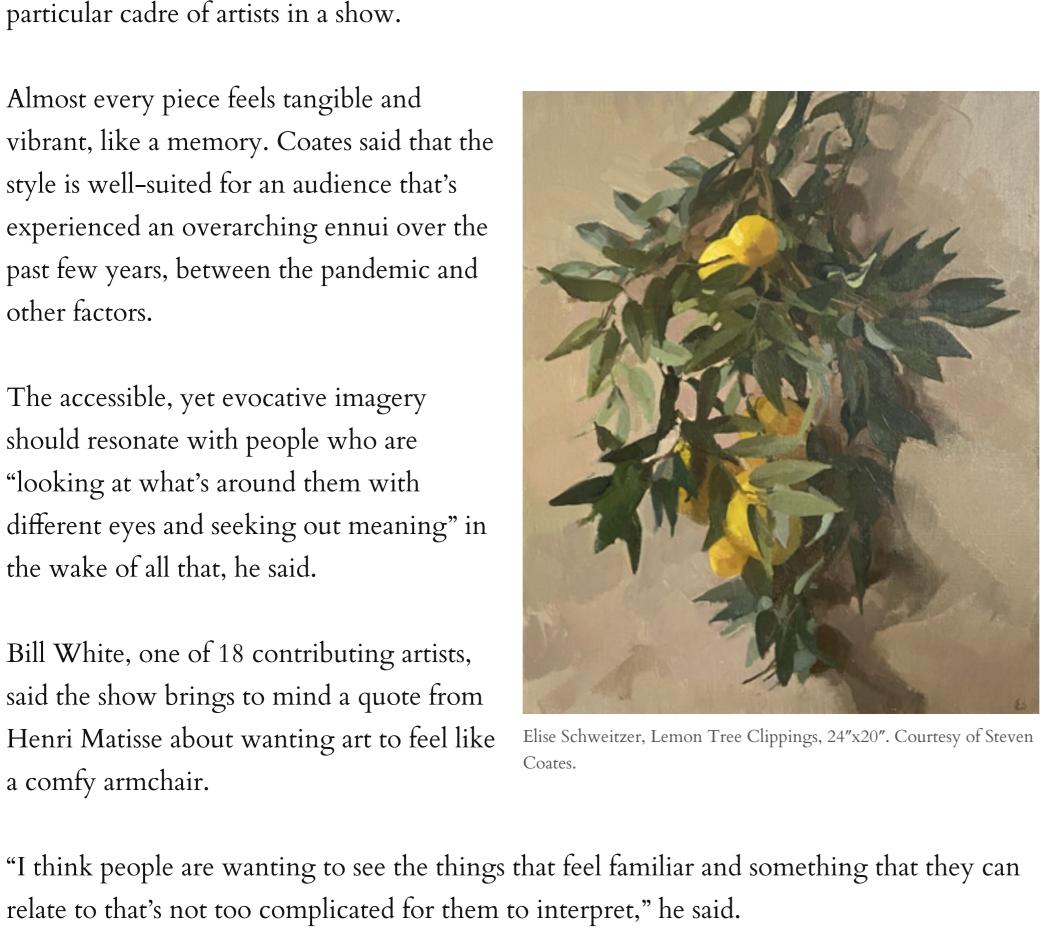
curator for connecting the artists — it's one thing to envision the broad influence of the

movement in the region, but another thing for it to come together in an exhibit.

Steven Francis Fine Art gallery in Wyndhurst.

"New Real" will run at both locations through Feb. 23.

Phillip Geiger, Virginia Playground, Oil on Linen, 40"x48". Courtesy of Steven Coates.



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