



## CENTERS FOR THE ARTS BONITA SPRINGS

2 CENTERS | 1 MISSION | ARTS FOR ALL

VISUAL ARTS CENTER, 26100 OLD 41 RD

PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, 10150 BONITA BEACH RD

[ARTCENTERBONITA.ORG](http://ARTCENTERBONITA.ORG)

[MEDIA DROPBOX](#)

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NEW EXHIBITION OPENING IN APRIL AT CFABS

## STEPHEN JOHNSON: METAMORPHOSIS

### April 21-JUNE 14, 2023

Performing Arts Center

10150 Bonita Beach Rd, Bonita Springs, FL

Gallery Hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm; Saturday, 9am-2pm

Admission is Free

### [PHOTOS IN DROPBOX](#)

#### Image Captions:

01. Stephen Johnson, **Bedtime Stories**, 2021,  
mixed media: found objects, paper, vinyl on wood panel, 18 x 18 inches
02. Stephen Johnson, **Blink**, 1994,  
mixed media: acrylic, heat transfers, silkscreen on canvas, 40 x 48 inches
03. Stephen Johnson, **Cloud Control #22**, 2022,  
mixed media: acrylic, silkscreen, spray paint, paper on wood panel, 30 x 30 inches
04. Stephen Johnson, **Suburban Expressionism #5**, 2011,  
mixed media: acrylic, paper, silkscreen, vinyl tapes on wood panel, 24 x 18 inches
05. Stephen Johnson, **Swarm #1**, 2009,  
mixed media: silkscreen, applique on wood, 20 x 26 inches
06. Stephen Johnson, **Untitled #1**, 2015,  
mixed media: acrylic, paper, silkscreen, vinyl tapes on wood panel, 18 x 18 inches
07. Stephen Johnson, **Zones #1**, 1998,  
mixed media: acrylic, heat transfers, silkscreen on canvas, 38 x 38 inches

*Metamorphosis* features more than sixty original works, covering the last three decades of the late Stephen Johnson's creative and highly productive career. Born in Tampa and raised in Fort Myers, Johnson studied art at the University of South Florida earning a Bachelor of Arts degree with a photography concentration in 1974. He began his artistic career as a nature photographer and over the next five decades continued to grow, develop, and change. His art on exhibit spans the years 1992 to 2022 and illustrates his development and expressive use of composition and content. Johnson is best known for his mixed-media collage paintings wherein he combined diverse imagery, varied materials, and rhythmic textures to create complex works of art—many



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of which serve as diagrams of the cosmos and natural worlds at both their grandest and most infinitesimal levels.

In addition to being an artist, Johnson was an educator and champion for learning who taught art classes at the Centers for the Arts Bonita Springs. He understood the importance of art education in a democratic society and promoted education for all. Proceeds from the sale of his artwork will benefit CFABS *Annual Student Showcase* and provide scholarships to college-bound art students.

### **About Stephen James Johnson, 1952-2022**

Stephen Johnson was born in Tampa. He was raised in Fort Myers where he arrived at age 2. Johnson attended Fort Myers High School and then went to the University of South Florida in Tampa. After graduating in 1974 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a concentration in photography, Johnson worked in graphic design and also as a freelance nature photographer. His photographs were included in printed publications and on greeting cards. During this time, Johnson met his partner David Gilbert whom he later married.

In 1983, the two moved to Collier County and eventually settled on a 5.5-acre estate where Johnson had a large darkroom and art studio. While Johnson continued his work as a photographer, his love of music led him into the retail music business. Together with Gilbert, he co-owned Turntable Records in the Naples Shopping Plaza on Highway 41. Johnson managed the business selling vinyl records, concert tickets, and his own custom-made t-shirts.

Johnson took inspiration and motivation from music and listened to it while creating in his studio. Favorite bands included Blue Cheer, Captain Beefheart, the Dandy Warhols, and the Ramons. He attended concerts, but never followed bands or became a “fan” in the traditional sense. He didn’t believe in putting people on pedestals and was known for telling his family and friends, “Never have humans for your heroes. They will always disappoint you.”

Johnson and Gilbert also owned and operated fast-food franchises. To give back to the community, they sponsored an annual coloring contest at Naples Park Elementary School. The contest was open to students in all grade levels. Johnson served as the awards judge and assigned awards to the most creative entries. The award-winning artworks were always done by students who essentially “colored outside the lines.” The students earned Johnson’s recognition by considering the entire page as a work of art and including the margins in the overall design, in an expressive and creative manner.



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In order to fully embrace emerging digital technology, Johnson and Gilbert sold their estate home and in 1996 headed to Orlando where they both enrolled as full-time students at Full Sail University. As part of the Associate of Arts degree program, they studied digital media in all of its forms with extensive coursework in the Business of Art, Audio Recording, Film and Video, Movie and Television Production, Computer Graphics, 3D-Modeling, Animation, and 3D-Animation. They graduated in 1997 and remained in Orlando where Johnson accepted a job at the University of Central Florida creating computer graphics for the Defense Department.

After six years in Orlando, Johnson and Gilbert returned to Southwest Florida and settled in Bonita Springs where Johnson created art in his home studio and taught Photoshop classes for adults and youth at the Centers for the Arts.

Stephen Johnson was methodical in his creative process and very organized about the creation of each new work. He was constantly sourcing art supplies and objects. Before he started creating new artwork, Johnson had a clear concept for it and had already assigned it an artwork title. His studio was always well-stocked and organized. He used flat files, racks, and bins to maintain an extensive inventory of materials for use in future works. From paint, paper scrapes with handwriting, small-shiny objects, rolls of stick-on vinyl, photographic images, and decals, to wood-painting boards, Johnson was always prepared to express himself with new and original artwork.

Major and reoccurring themes in Johnson's work include the cosmos, meteorology, nature in its many forms, and popular culture. After art, meteorology and astronomy were Johnson's two strongest passions. Throughout his career, he was aware of other artists and learned by studying their artwork and reading their books. He was especially interested in composition and how artists structured a picture plane. Early and continuing influences included Max Ernst, Robert Rauschenberg, Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, and Cy Twombly. Late-career influences included Lance Letscher of Austin, Texas, and Jean Michele Basquiat.

### **Exhibition Opening Reception**

On Friday, April 21 from 6 to 8pm the Centers for the Arts Bonita Springs will host a free reception for the exhibition ***Stephen Johnson: Metamorphosis*** at the Performing Arts Center, 10150 Bonita Beach Road.



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### **ABOUT THE CENTERS FOR THE ARTS BONITA SPRINGS:**

Founded in 1959, the Centers for the Arts Bonita Springs (CFABS) is committed to enriching the lives of the community by providing opportunities for artistic expression, education, and appreciation. **CFABS has two locations—each dedicated to the visual or performing arts.**

**The Visual Arts Center, 26100 Old 41 Road**, is a 10-acre, four-building campus, which consists of multiple fine art galleries, fully equipped art studios, a gift shop, an art resource library, beautiful sculpture gardens, and a nature preserve. A variety of classes are offered at this center including painting, drawing, clay, sculpture, glass, mixed media, and more. This center offers unique, year-round art exhibitions and other special events.

**The Performing Arts Center, 10150 Bonita Beach Road**, is a 4-acre, two-building campus, which is home to the 400-seat Hinman Auditorium and Gallery in the Round; the 200-seat Moe Auditorium & Film Center/Dance Studio; and fully equipped art studios. At this diverse center, patrons can enjoy an ongoing array of live concerts, theatre, comedy, film, lectures, youth and adult dance classes, music lessons, and art classes.

**ARTS FOR ALL**—Seeking to serve the educational and cultural needs of the diverse community, CFABS offers year-round programming, plus, three top-rated Art Festivals in January, February, and March, which draw hundreds of remarkable artists from around the world to beautiful, historic Downtown Bonita Springs, Florida.

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