

6-1-2002

## 'Martha Simkins Rediscovered'

Furman University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine>

---

### Recommended Citation

University, Furman (2002) "'Martha Simkins Rediscovered,'" *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 45 : Iss. 2 , Article 9.  
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol45/iss2/9>

This Regular Feature is made available online by Journals, part of the Furman University Scholar Exchange (FUSE). It has been accepted for inclusion in Furman Magazine by an authorized FUSE administrator. For terms of use, please refer to the [FUSE Institutional Repository Guidelines](#). For more information, please contact [scholarexchange@furman.edu](mailto:scholarexchange@furman.edu).

# Furmanreports

## 'Martha Simkins Rediscovered'

Major retrospective comes to Thompson Gallery

Martha Simkins moved from Texas to New York City in 1893 to attend the Art Students League and develop her talents as a painter.

Such a move was not typical for a young, unmarried woman of that era, even though she was accompanied by her mother and siblings. But Simkins was apparently no ordinary woman — or artist.

In New York, she studied under such influential artists as William Merritt Chase and Kenyon Cox. As her experiences and friendships broadened, her skills, particularly for portraiture, began to earn her considerable recognition.

Soon she was dividing her time between Dallas, Texas, New York City, and the art colony at Woodstock, New York. She became a member of the Pen and Brush Club, a cultural club for women, and of the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors. During trips to Europe, she reported that she met and worked with such notables as John Singer Sargent and Mary Cassatt.

Eventually her paintings began to be exhibited at leading national and international galleries, among them the Corcoran in Washington, D.C., the National Academy of Design and other New York galleries, and the Paris Salon. During an era when few women were active in the professional art world, she was establishing herself as a highly respected artist.

But in 1934, despite the growing acclaim, she returned to Dallas, apparently because of family obligations. She would live there, outside the artistic mainstream, for the rest of her life, teaching, painting and exhibiting on a regional level.

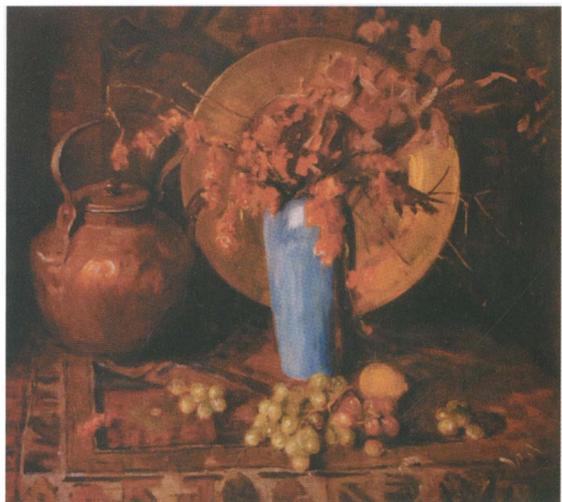
She remained active as an artist almost until her death in 1969 at the age of 103, and her talents were well known and appreciated in her home state. But given her success in the early part of the 20th century, the question lingers: What might have happened had Simkins not returned to Texas but continued to work and exhibit on the national stage?

Furman will offer a glimpse of the possibilities this fall when, 33 years after her death and 76 years after the *Dallas Morning News* wrote that she "brought much distinction to the city . . . because of the high praise she received as one of America's leading woman portrait painters," a major retrospective of her work comes to the Thompson Gallery in the Roe Art Building.

"Martha Simkins Rediscovered," which Furman will host from September 16 through October 26, will feature more than 50 of the artist's portraits, figural images, still lifes and landscapes. Bob Chance, chair of the art department, describes the exhibit as "very important — perhaps the finest Furman has ever hosted." After leaving Furman, the exhibit will travel to galleries in Augusta and Marietta, Ga., before ending its tour in Irving, Texas.

It is fitting that Furman will launch the tour, because Simkins' family has a significant connection to the university. In the early 1800s, her grandfather, Arthur Simkins, donated the land in Edgefield, S.C., that would become the founding site for the Furman Academy and Theological Institution.

The show is open to the public without charge. It will feature two receptions, one September 16 and another October 18 as part of Homecoming Weekend. Support for the exhibit is provided by Mary and Jim Simkins '78 (a relative of the artist's), Nancy Dew Taylor '61, Jeanne Saunders Davis '56, Roger Saunders, and by the South Carolina Humanities Council, the Emrys Foundation



**A portrait of Mrs. Asher D. Cohen, the mother of one of Simkins' friends, is considered the artist's most important work. "Still Life with Copper Pot" may be Simkins' most accomplished still life.**

and Greenville's Metropolitan Arts Council, which receives funding from the City of Greenville and the South Carolina Arts Commission with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

*For more information on the exhibit, contact the Department of Art at (864) 294-2074.*