

art

A show, an auction for Mym Tuma

BY STEVE PARKS

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Southampton artist Mym Tuma never thought her correspondence with a friend would be worth tens of thousands of dollars one day. Or that they'd be auctioned along with letters by René Magritte, an original manuscript by Ayn Rand and lyrics by John Lennon.

In 1963, Marilyn Thuma — as she was known in her student days — graduated with a master's in painting from Stanford University. Scouring House Beautiful magazine, she was inspired by images of

Georgia O'Keeffe's home in Abiquiu, N.M. Sensing she'd found a kindred spirit, Tuma scrawled a note to the artist, asking if she might visit.

O'Keeffe responded in a card with an image of "Starlight Night." She wrote: "YesGOK"

The 50 letters from 1964-73 will be auctioned at Sotheby's Manhattan next Friday. Meanwhile, you can see Tuma's art — some inspired by O'Keeffe's nature paintings — at a show in Sag Harbor.

FAMOUS MENTOR On her visit, Tuma was intrigued by smooth, black, volcanic rocks hanging ornamentally in O'Keeffe's ranch house. "I'd never seen obsidian used that way," she recalls. From a nearby mine, she picked up samples and made a sculptured painting of obsidian. "I am glad you came," O'Keeffe wrote in July 1968. Offering support, she added, "Do not sell your car or part with your dog. I will send you the two thousand [dollars] that you need to get your next three paintings done" O'Keeffe added: "If I send it

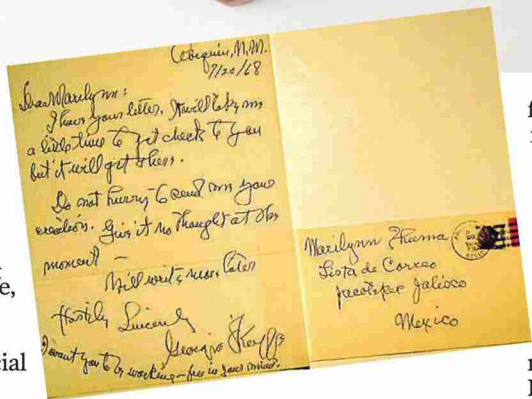




Artist Mym Tuma, mentored by Georgia O'Keeffe, with one of her works; below left, one of the letters to be auctioned

PHOTO BY GORDON M. GRANT

may I consider the black creation mine?" More than 50 years Tuma's senior — "I was born in 1940," Tuma admits with a laugh — O'Keeffe, who died at 98 in 1986, was both mentor and financial supporter to the younger artist. "I want you to be working free in your mind," she wrote while advancing Tuma another \$2,000.



part of her permanent collection," Tuma says. **SCULPTURED PAINTINGS** As much as she was influenced by O'Keeffe and her paintings of

flowers, rocks, shells and animal bones, Tuma works in a different vernacular. "The desert was not my idiom," she says, referring to O'Keeffe's New Mexico landscape. "My vision is the East End. I call it God's country," Tuma says. She describes her sculptured paintings, on display at the new LaurenG Shop in Sag Harbor, as "a type of bas relief reflecting radiant energy in the environment." One of Tuma's works, "Blue Morninglory Sunrise," a three-dimensional painting on epoxy, evokes her mentor's flower paintings — as well as her own, earlier "Morning Glory" in two-dimension pastel.



"The Morninglory," a sculptured painting on epoxy by Tuma

WHAT Shell abstractions, sculptured paintings and acrylics by Mym Tuma; auction of correspondence between Tuma and Georgia O'Keeffe

WHEN | WHERE Tuma paintings at LaurenG Shop, 112 Hampton St., Sag Harbor, 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursdays through Mondays through June 20; auction preview 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. tomorrow through Thursday, auction 10 a.m. June 18, at Sotheby's Manhattan, 1334 York Ave. at 72nd Street

INFO LaurenG: lauren gshop.com, 888-339-4779; Sotheby's: sothebys.com, 212-606-7414