

*CROWE, JOHNSON COLLABORATE ON INTERNATIONAL NC ARTS COUNCIL PROJECT*

A duo of internationally recognized Western North Carolina artists--painter Robert Johnson and poet Thomas Rain Crowe--in collaboration with a Brazilian publisher and the North Carolina Arts Council--will be presenting the product of a unique project at the Blue Spiral Gallery in Asheville on Saturday, August 24, at 2:00pm. Johnson, whose work is represented by the Blue Spiral Gallery, and Crowe have worked together in the past combining the Celo-based artist's visual images with the Tuckasegee resident's writing. Johnson has also done book covers for other publications, including a recent cover for translator Nan Watkins's translations of the work of Franco-German poet Yvan Goll. Copies of all of Johnson's book collaborations will be on display and for sale--along with a special exhibit of his paintings and professional sketches.

The August 24 event will focus on the Johnson/Crowe book *Postcards From Peru*, a project that was funded by a Regional Artist Project Grant from the Haywood County Arts Council as an affiliate with the NC Arts Council. In collaboration with Sol Negro Edicoes's editor Marcio Simoes based in Brazil, a limited-edition, bilingual book of has been created based on poems and postcards that Crowe penned while on an extended trip to Peru in April of 2007. Combining postcards written to artist-friends in the U.S. and abroad and companion poems during Crowe's journey in the South American country, the result is a unique and interesting view into the landscape, lives and cultures of that country. Johnson, too, spent extended time in Peru in 2011, traveling and sketching before returning home to NC and creating a whole series of Peru-inspired paintings--several of which will be on display for the August formal launch at the Blue Spiral.

The fine-editions book translated, designed and created in Brazil is in both Portugese and English languages and done in a two-cover format that essentially gives the reader a two-books-in-one product. With Johnson's double-sided covers and interior artwork and Crowe's interesting postcards and provocative "travel poems," the result is a first-of-its-kind artistic creation in both a visual and literary context.

Robert Johnson grew up in South America in Caracas, Venezuela. He received his undergraduate degree at the University of Louisville, in Louisville, KY. He worked thereafter as an apprentice to the artists Karl Knaths and Mark Rothko before moving to San Francisco where he went on to get a graduate degree in painting at Mills College in 1970. The west-coast 'back to the land' movement inspired him and brought him back to the East coast and the Celo community in the Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina. His work has been described as a blend of pantheism and Deep Ecology--focusing on the recording of our vanishing wide-open natural environment. He has explored and painted ecosystems in South Dakota, Ecuador, Panama, New Zealand and Peru while focusing primarily on the Blue Ridge Southern Appalachian region. His work has been exhibited and is collected nationally and internationally. He has painted landscape murals in several places in North Carolina including the Raleigh-Durham airport. He currently splits his time between the Celo Community in Mitchell County and Asheville.

Thomas Crowe is an internationally-published author of thirty books, including the multi-award winning book of nonfiction *Zoro's Field: My Life in the Appalachian Woods*; *The End of Eden: Writings of an Environmental Activist* (essays); *A House of Girls* (short stories); *The Laugharne Poems* written in Wales and published by Welsh publisher Carreg Gwalch in 1997; and edited the classic Celtic language anthology *Writing the Wind: A Celtic Resurgence*. As an editor, he has worked with Beatitude magazine, Katuah Journal and the Asheville Poetry Review. He is founder and publisher of New Native Press. His literary archives have been purchased by the Duke University Special Collections Library. He lives in the Tuckasegee community of rural western North Carolina.

**This special event and official Arts Council book-launch is free and open to the public. Artist Robert Johnson and author Thomas Rain Crowe will both give talks in a specially-prepared upstairs galley concerning their respective trips to Peru as well as the process of their creations and the collaboration on this particular project. A reception and book-signing will follow the formal presentations and both artist and author will be available to talk to those in attendance. For further information about this event contact Blue Spiral Gallery at 828-251-0202 or at the gallery website at [www.bluespiral1.com](http://www.bluespiral1.com)**