



Press Release

### **Reed Arts Pays Tribute to Popular Ohio Artist Charley Harper**

(Columbus, Ohio, June 24, 2011) – A Columbus custom picture framing studio has acknowledged the work of popular Ohio artist Charley Harper in two big, exclusive ways.

#### **Ohio Nylon Flag**

Reed Arts has produced Harper's iconic rendition of the word "Ohio" as a nylon flag. The image is taken from a gouache painting the artist created in the 1980s, using his trademark cardinal and ladybug designs as letter Os, and the Ohio state tree's buckeye leaf incorporated into the letter i.

Reed Arts initiated discussion of creating the flags with Brett Harper, son of the late artist, and Chip Doyle, curator of the Harper estate.

"Getting the approval from Charley's estate was a big deal for me," said Reed Arts President Tim O'Neill, CPF. "The Harper estate is very particular about the release of new merchandise featuring Charley's work – it's kind of like being accepted into the Harper family. Keeping company with other Harper merchandisers, like designer Todd Oldham, is a bit of an honor."

The flags currently are available only at Reed Arts.

#### ***Seeing Red***

Reed Arts also created an homage to Harper's painting, *Seeing Red*, with a giant installation on the surface of the frame shop's windows. The window motif shows an oversized depiction of Harper's male cardinal, seeming to flutter against a reflection of itself in the window. The design was applied to the outer surface of the window panels in vinyl by Custom Sign Center of Columbus.

What perhaps makes the image so stunning (aside from its 15' x 18' size), is the framework that surrounds it, according to O'Neill. "In 2009, I commissioned Ohio artist Greg Ackers to create a custom picture frame to adorn the outside of our building," he said. "It immediately tells passersby who we are and what we do. What it's been missing is a work of art to support it. I think *Seeing Red* is the perfect image to compliment Greg's frame."

Charley Harper (August 4, 1922 - June 10, 2007) was a Cincinnati-based American Modernist artist. He was best known for his highly stylized wildlife prints, posters and book illustrations. In a style he called "minimal realism," Charley Harper captured the essence of his subjects with the fewest possible visual elements.

During his career, Harper illustrated numerous books, notably The Golden Book of Biology, magazines such as Ford Times, as well as many prints, posters and other works. As his subjects are mainly natural, with birds prominently featured, Charley often created works for many nature-based organizations.

Regarding the "Ohio" image, O'Neill says the original painting was on display in his shop this past December. "I thought it was a very powerful, yet simple image – something Charley Harper excelled in creating. Once I saw the painting in storage at the Harper estate in Cincinnati, I immediately knew it would have an enormous appeal to the people of Columbus. It's so basic, yet so strong."

Harper's *Seeing Red* has a special appeal to O'Neill. "My dad's nickname was 'Red'," he said. "So this image has touched me in a sentimental way. But that's the wonderful power of art, that it can evoke such strong emotions in people."

Reed Arts represents the work of Harper in Central Ohio and hosted an exhibit of two dozen original paintings and rare prints by Harper from December 2010 through February 2011. A second round of originals was on display through May. Harper fans came in droves to see the rarely viewed works of art, O'Neill said.

"Frankly, I was not surprised at the turnout," said O'Neill. "I knew there were many Harper fans out there, but what surprised me was that practically everyone has a personal Harper story. Charley was very much a people person and loved talking to his fans at gallery openings and book signings. Since Charley started out his career as an illustrator, lots of folks grew up seeing his work throughout the years in biology books, cookbooks and magazines without realizing it until later."

High resolution photos of the Harper "Ohio" flags and *Seeing Red* window installation, and information about Charley Harper or Reed Arts are available by contacting Tim O'Neill at Reed Arts, 909 W. 5th Avenue in Columbus, 43212.

### About Reed Arts

Reed Arts is central Ohio's premier fine custom picture framer, specializing in preservation and conservation techniques, and employing a staff with more than 100 years combined experience in the industry. Visit the Reed Arts website at [www.reedarts.com](http://www.reedarts.com) or 909 W. 5th Avenue in Columbus, 43212.

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