Living in an age of space exploration, robotics, advanced computer technology... the worship of science, the wood sculpture of John Geldersma transports the modern viewer to another place, another time. Giant serpents coil and slither across museum walls, forming ritualistic shields which resonate with the pulse of ancient civilizations. As we meditate upon these arresting images, visions of our ancestors appear. We hear their chants; we feel the warm glow of fire; we taste the wild game,” says Herman Mhire, director of the University Art Museum.

Geldersma, Associate Professor of Visual Arts in the School of Art and Architecture at USL, spent his childhood in Harvey, across the river from New Orleans. “He would animate his bike by embellishing it with his ‘treasures.’ He made toy boats out of thrown-away stuff—nails for masts, etc.—resembling certain African fetish forms he would find out about in due time. The icons and crosses in the old parish church he visited while still in grammar school fascinated him. Not so much the ritual; more so the sacred images,” wrote Calvin Harlan in a recent Florida exhibition catalogue.

Geldersma’s visual language is one of archetypal forms, primary colors, and the mysticism of south Louisiana... a cultural blend of French, Spanish, Afro-American, Caribbean, Anglo-Saxon and American Indian peoples. His charred woodsculpture, Geldersma and painted sculptures are carved from rough-hewn wooden blocks and planks. As a child, Geldersma drew and carved, but not until he studied Pre-Columbian and African art in college did he begin to seriously investigate wood sculpture. Holding a bachelor of fine arts degree from USL and a master of fine arts degree from Rutgers University in New Jersey, Geldersma has served as curator of education and registrar at the New Orleans Museum of Art before coming to tech at USL in 1970. His work has been included in many important regional, national and international exhibitions including: Louisiane Bien-Aimee, Paris, 1976; the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1986; Jacksonville Art Museum, Florida, 1986 and

Woodsculpture, Geldersma 1982; Art League of Houston, Texas, 1984; Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1986; Southern Arts Federation, Atlanta, 1988; Kriss Art Center, Whirlpool Foundation Sculpture Competition, Michigan, 1986, and Todd Capp Gallery, New York City, 1986. “John Geldersma: Via Serpents” opens at the

University Art Museum Permanent Collection Building on the corner of St. Mary Boulevard and Girard Park Drive Sunday, May 10 from 2-5 p.m. The general public is invited to attend free of charge. For more information telephone the art museum at 231-6326, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.