Stovall Press Release

Debra Force Fine Art is pleased to present *Queena Stovall (1887-1980): Paintings of a Country Life*. Featuring four works by the self-taught artist, Stovall’s paintings are deeply personal reflections of her life and experiences in rural Virginia.

Emma Serena Dillard (nicknamed “Queena” in her childhood) was born in Campbell County, Virginia. She grew up in nearby Lynchburg, where at 21, she married Jonathan Breckenridge “Brack” Stovall. Her world revolved around family and farming after moving permanently to a farm in Amherst County, at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, in 1945. There, she raised her eight children, while recording local seasonal and daily routines such as blackberry picking, baptisms, and Saturday night baths, often featuring neighbors, friends, and family.

Stovall painted her first oil in 1949 at age sixty-two and her last complete work in 1967. She produced only forty-nine paintings, most of them in the early 1950s, and exhibited with Kraushaar Galleries in New York between 1951 and 1956. In 1974 and 1975, the exhibition *Queena Stovall, Artist of the Blue Ridge Piedmont* travelled to Lynchburg College, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, and the New York State Historical Association. She was the first naïve American painter to be honored with an exhibition funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Recent museum exhibitions include *Queena Stovall, Reflections of a Country Life* at the Daura Gallery, University of Lynchburg (2009) and *Inside Looking Out, The Art of Queena Stovall* (2018), which traveled from the Daura Gallery to the Virginia Museum of History and Culture in Richmond.

*The Baptising* (1951), which is featured in the current exhibition, is one of the artist’s most ambitious undertaking in terms of size, subject matter, complexity of composition, and narrative power. River baptisms were still a common occurrence in Amherst County in the mid-20th Century, and Stovall was conversant with the Baptist ritual. She returned to the subject a few years later with *Baptizing – Pedlar River* (1957), that was purchased by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond in 1959.

*Queena Stovall (1887-1980): Paintings of a Country Life* is on view at Debra Force Fine Art from January 20 – February 21, 2020 and is accompanied by a catalogue. Gallery hours are 10am – 6pm, Monday – Friday and Saturdays by appointment. The gallery will be open on Saturday, January 25, from 12-6pm.

Please contact the gallery at 212-734-3636 or info@debraforce.com for additional information about the exhibition.