

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
January 9, 2008

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Tradition/Innovation: American Masterpieces of Southern Craft and Traditional Art to Tour Southeast 2008-2010

The Southern Arts Federation announces the creation of a new touring exhibit ***Tradition/Innovation: American Masterpieces of Southern Craft and Traditional Art***. Featuring more than 100 artworks created by masters living and working in the South today, *Tradition/Innovation* will tour to nine museums throughout the Southeast, January 2008–spring, 2010.

American Masterpieces, an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, is a major initiative to acquaint Americans with the best of their cultural and artistic legacy. “Through this exhibit and the online and educational materials that we’ll present, we want to introduce people in the South to master artists and craftspeople living and working in their own communities,” said Gerri Combs, Executive Director of the Southern Arts Federation. “The incredible diversity of these individuals and the objects they create will give people a new window into the traditions of the South’s many cultural communities and the vibrant contemporary craft movement in the region.” Among the artists in the exhibit are six recipients of the National Endowment for the Arts’ National Heritage Fellowship, the country’s highest honor for traditional artists.

Works by 58 master traditional artists and contemporary craftspeople from the Southern Arts Federation’s nine partner states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee) will be accompanied by a rich array of artist interviews, stories, and background information on the artists and their process. Visitors will experience the artwork, photos and stories of the artists, and an audio guide featuring interviews with the artists. The exhibit website, www.traditioninnovation.com, launching in February 2008, will feature a “virtual gallery” with images of the artwork; information, stories and interview excerpts with the artists; and a section of learning activities for teachers and families.

Visitors will view works in glass, clay, fiber, metal, wood, paper and mixed media. Among the works on display will be wooden books, a Mardi Gras Indian costume, a set of silver mint julep cups, ceramic face jugs, white oak and sweetgrass baskets, an iron apron, miniature teapots, glass sculptures, traditional quilts, a wooden half hull boat model, ceramic goblets and a sponge diving helmet.

The combination of contemporary craft and traditional art in this exhibit offers visitors the opportunity to explore the “threads” between two different approaches to creating artwork, and also to compare the approaches of traditional and contemporary artists. According to co-curator

Kathleen Mundell, “Some of the artists featured in *Tradition/Innovation* are rooted in a respect for traditional technique, materials and a connection to a specific place or culture. Others explore and expand ideas of form, function and community. Whether it be in the studio or at the kitchen table, each artfully balances skill, vision and tradition.” Jean McLaughlin, co-curator, states “Through this exhibition, the mastery of craftsmanship is underscored, and individuality—the voice and fingerprint of the maker—is eloquently conveyed. Serious craftsmanship requires many years of attention to acquiring technical skills and facility with materials as well as a profound grasp of history and tradition.” *Tradition/Innovation* is curated by Jean McLaughlin, Penland School of Crafts, and Kathleen Mundell, Cultural Resources; the exhibition’s education curators are Martin Rollins, Isaac Shelby Elementary School, Louisville, KY, and Judy Sizemore, Kentucky Arts Council.

Tour dates confirmed as of January 2008 include:

Georgia: March 1- May 18, 2008
Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA

Kentucky: June 7 - August, 23, 2008
Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, Louisville, KY

Tennessee: October 2, 2008 - January 11, 2009
Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, TN

Florida: February 27 - April 25, 2009
Pensacola Museum of Art, Pensacola, FL

North Carolina: May - July 2009
Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, NC

South Carolina: September - October 2009
Sumter County Gallery of Art, Sumter, SC

Alabama: January - April 2010
Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University, Auburn, AL

Mississippi: Dates TBA 2010
Ohr-O’Keefe Museum of Art, Biloxi, MS

Louisiana: TBA 2010

Tradition/Innovation: American Masterpieces of Southern Craft & Traditional Art is a project of the Southern Arts Federation, and is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art. The Southern Arts Federation, a non-profit regional arts organization founded in 1975, works in partnership with nine state arts agencies to build on the South’s unique heritage and enhance the public value of the arts in our communities by promoting and supporting the arts in the South; enhancing the artistic excellence and professionalism of Southern arts organizations and artists; and serving the diverse population of the South. Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee are partnering states. SAF is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, member states, foundations, businesses and individuals. Visit www.SouthArts.org.