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Exhibition Announcement

*Race and Representation: The African American Presence in American Art*

August 20 – November 20, 2011

The Weatherspoon Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is pleased to present the exhibition *Race and Representation: The African American Presence in American Art*. Featuring approximately 25 works by 15 multi-generational artists, the exhibition is presented as part of the Weatherspoon Art Museum’s 70th Anniversary year showcasing its permanent collection. American visual culture is permeated with the history and memory of slavery and racism. This exhibition suggests that however much we may seek to affirm a cultural diversity that transcends historically instigated racial boundaries, the African American presence remains American democracy’s greatest sticking point and testing ground.

The exhibition is organized around the recent acquisition of two works by pre-eminent, contemporary artists Kara Walker and Leonardo Drew. In the contrasting languages of narrative figuration and allegorical abstraction, both artists speak to an understanding of the world forged by an African American identity and heritage. Complementing Walker’s *An Unpeopled Land in Unchartered Waters* (2010) and Drew’s *Number 119D* (2009) is a
range of works from the museum’s permanent collection that demonstrates the centrality of the African American experience to American visual culture. Primarily but not exclusively created by black artists, these paintings, prints, and sculptures highlight the extraordinary creative visual expression that is but one aspect of that experience. They also dramatize the impossibility of circumscribing African American experience within particular conceptual or stylistic boundaries. The extended range of subject matter (from runaway slaves to the reclining female nude) and competing strategies of representation (from Renaissance perspective to minimalist abstraction and from performance and conceptual art to postmodern appropriation) suggest the ongoing necessity of regarding the African American experience as a touchstone for and microcosm of American culture more generally.

The exhibition is organized by Elaine D. Gustafson, Curator of Collections, and George Dimock, Associate Professor of Art History, UNCG. Support for this exhibition was provided through the generosity of Bob and Lissa Shelley McDowell and Fairway Outdoor Advertising.


**Related Education and Public Programming**

*Noon @ the ‘Spoon Tour*
**Tuesday, September 13, 12 noon**
Noon @ the ‘Spoon features a 20-minute tour of a new exhibition. Offered every second Tuesday of the month. Free.

*Scholars Panel Discussion*
**Tuesday, November 8, 6 pm**
Location: WAM auditorium
Discussion led by UNCG faculty Sarah Cervenak, George Dimock and Frank Woods sponsored by the African American Studies program and the Conversations with the Community series.

For a complete, updated list of programs, visit [http://weatherspoon.uncg.edu](http://weatherspoon.uncg.edu).

**About the Weatherspoon Art Museum**

**Mission**
The Weatherspoon Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro acquires, preserves, exhibits, and interprets modern and contemporary art for the benefit of its multiple audiences, including university, community, regional, and beyond. Through these activities, the museum recognizes its paramount role of public service, and enriches the lives of diverse individuals by fostering an informed appreciation and understanding of the visual arts and their relationship to the world in which we live.

**History**
The **Weatherspoon Art Museum** at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro was founded by Gregory Ivy in 1941 and is the earliest of any art facilities within the UNC system. The museum was founded as a resource for the campus, community, and region and its early leadership developed an emphasis—maintained to this day—on presenting and acquiring modern and contemporary works of art. A 1950 bequest from the renowned collection of Claribel and Etta Cone, which included prints and bronzes by Henri Matisse and other works on paper by American and European modernists, helped to establish the Weatherspoon’s permanent collection. Other prescient acquisitions during Ivy’s tenure included a 1951 suspended mobile by Alexander Calder, *Woman* by Willem de Kooning, a pivotal work in the artist’s career that was purchased in 1954, and the first drawings by Eva Hesse and Robert Smithson to enter a museum collection.

In 1989, the museum moved into its present location in The Anne and Benjamin Cone Building designed by the architectural firm Mitchell Giurgula. The museum has six galleries and a sculpture courtyard with over 17,000 square feet of exhibition space. The American Association of Museums accredited the Weatherspoon in 1995 and renewed its accreditation in 2005.

**Collections + Exhibitions**

The permanent collection of the Weatherspoon Art Museum is considered to be one of the foremost of its kind in the Southeast. It represents all major art movements from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. Of the nearly 6,000 works in the collection are pieces by such prominent figures as Sol LeWitt, Robert Mangold, Cindy Sherman, Al Held, Alex Katz, Henry Tanner, Louise Nevelson, Mark di Suvero, Deborah Butterfield, and Robert Rauschenberg. The museum regularly lends to major exhibitions nationally and internationally.

The Weatherspoon also is known for its adventurous and innovative exhibition program. Through a dynamic annual calendar of fifteen to eighteen exhibitions and a multi-disciplinary educational program for audiences of all ages, the museum provides an opportunity for audiences to consider artistic, cultural, and social issues of our time and enriches the life of our university, community, and region.

**Weatherspoon Art Museum**

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