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First Stage of National Portrait Gallery's Inaugural Portrait Competition An Overwhelming Success

*Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006
Attracted more than 4,000 entries nationwide*

As summer unofficially came to a close earlier this month, the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery wound up the request for entries for its first-ever national portrait competition, the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006. Launched on June 1, the competition received more than 4,000 entries from emerging and mid-career portrait and figurative artists from across the country.

"We were extremely impressed with the range and caliber of entries," says Marc Pachter, the Gallery's director. "Based on other portrait competitions around the world, we hoped for around 2,000 entries. We have far surpassed that goal, which goes to show that not only is portraiture alive and well in the United States, it is ready to take center stage in the art world."

An innovative feature of the competition is its "Portrait of an Artist" Web site, where the works and journals of 10 artists who entered the competition are featured and updated regularly, giving viewers a window to their world. "We have received several e-mails and messages from artists and art lovers, saying how much they enjoy 'Portrait of an Artist'," says Pachter. "It has been a great way to see what is happening in contemporary figurative art around the country." "Portrait of an Artist" will continue to be updated through November 2005.

Jurors include the artist Sidney Goodman; Thelma Golden of The Studio Museum in Harlem, N.Y.; independent scholar and curator Trevor Fairbrother; and art critic and scholar Katy Siegel. The 50 to 60 finalists will be notified in March 2006, and the resulting exhibition will open on July 4, 2006, with the grand re-opening of the National Portrait Gallery.

The first prize of \$25,000 will include a commission to create a portrait of a remarkable living American for the Gallery's permanent collection. Other cash prizes will be awarded for selected works. Additionally, entrants may also win a People's Choice Award. Future competitions, to be held triennially, will explore other forms of portraiture, including watercolor, drawing, photography, film, video, and electronic and digital media. For more information, visit www.portraitcompetition.si.edu.

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