The National Portrait Gallery Highlights Five Contemporary Artists in
“Portraiture Now: Framing Memory”

“Framing Memory,” the second exhibition in the ongoing “Portraiture Now” series, opens
Friday, May 25 at the National Portrait Gallery and will run through Jan. 6, 2008. The exhibition
highlights contemporary art that incorporates portraits of iconic figures as a means of exploring history
and culture. Included in the exhibition are portraits of such emblematic figures as Martin Luther King,
Frida Kahlo, Jacqueline Kennedy, Cesar Chavez and Josephine Baker, whose images serve as
evocative triggers of memory for both artist and audience.

“Portraiture Now: Framing Memory” features the works of five artists, each of whom broaden
a traditional understanding of portraiture by integrating recognizable, remembered likenesses into
larger explorations of personal and public identity. In photographs, paintings, sculptural wall
installations, quilts and other media, these varied artists use portraiture to confront cultural norms and
practices and remind viewers of the individual’s collective role in history.

“This exhibition gives the National Portrait Gallery an opportunity to showcase the work of
leading contemporary artists whose practice involves memory and iconic images of American leaders,”
said Marc Pachter, director of the museum.

The five artists whose works are featured in “Framing Memory” include:

• Alfredo Arreguín: This American artist pays homage to Latino heroes and activists
  through colorful canvases whose richly patterned grids abound with motifs inspired by
  the craft traditions of Arreguín’s native Mexico.
• Brett Cook: Known for his collaborative work within schools and communities, this Berkeley, Calif.-based artist creates works that interrogate connections to exemplary persons from the past and present. In January 2007, Cook worked with visual arts students at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C., to create two of the murals included in “Framing Memory.”

• Kerry James Marshall: Rooted in his experience as an African American who grew up during the 1960s, Marshall’s multimedia work has far-ranging implications for considering how individuals can shape their environment and, in turn, impact others, especially when their legacies are actively remembered.

• Tina Mion: With a wry wit and keen sense of history, Mion enhances her large iconic faces, naturalist figures and symbolic “object” portraits with implied narratives and themes.

• Faith Ringgold: This multimedia artist expresses the African American female experience through assemblages of fact and fantasy in the form of story quilts that reflect her desire to create a story about “attainment, love of family, art, helping others, courage, values and dreams coming true.”

“Portraiture Now” is a series of changing exhibitions focusing on contemporary artists who explore the age-old art of depicting the figure. Through a variety of media, “Portraiture Now” features artists who bring compelling figurative art into the 21st century.

The National Portrait Gallery
The Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery tells the stories of America through the individuals who have shaped its culture. Through the visual arts, performing arts and new media, the gallery portrays poets and presidents, visionaries and villains, actors and activists who speak American history.

The National Portrait Gallery was established by an act of Congress in 1962 and opened to the public in 1968. The museum’s collection of nearly 20,000 works ranges from paintings and sculpture to photographs and drawings. The National Portrait Gallery is housed in the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture at Eighth and F streets N.W., Washington, D.C. Smithsonian information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Web sites: npg.si.edu and reynoldscenter.org.

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