Smithsonian Announces Grand Opening on July 1 for Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery

The National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum welcome home their treasured collections to a newly restored historic building in Washington. Among the thousands of artworks returning to public view in the nation’s capital are the famous “Lansdowne” portrait of George Washington, portraits of notable Americans such as Marilyn Monroe and Shaquille O’Neal, large-scale video installations by Nam June Paik, and paintings by Edward Hopper and Georgia O’Keeffe. On opening day, the two museums will host a free day-long festival for the public that includes special programs and performances.

The building that houses the two museums has undergone an extensive renovation that showcases its most dramatic architectural features, including skylights, a curving double staircase, porticos and vaulted galleries illuminated by natural light. The museums, located on a two-city block site between Seventh and Ninth streets and between F and G streets N.W., are the cultural centerpiece of a revitalized downtown Washington.

The museums are known collectively as the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture, in honor of their largest donor, the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

New Features and Enhancements to the Building

When the Reynolds Center opens, both museums will share a main entrance on F Street; the G Street entrance will serve tour groups and provide access to the shared museum stores and to exhibitions. Two innovative and bold new public spaces—the Lunder Conservation Center and the Luce Foundation Center for American Art—provide new ways to experience American art and portraiture.

• Lunder Conservation Center—the first art conservation facility in the United States that allows the public permanent behind-the-scenes views of the museums’ preservation
work. Conservation staff from both museums will be visible to the public through floor-to-ceiling glass walls.

- Luce Foundation Center for American Art—the first visible art storage and study center in Washington, which will feature more than 3,200 objects from the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s permanent collection in secure glass cases.

**On View**

The Smithsonian American Art Museum’s permanent collection will be featured in six installations, including “American Experience,” “American Art through 1940” and contemporary works in the Lincoln Gallery. The museum also will present four temporary exhibitions: “William Wegman—Funney/Strange,” “American ABC: Childhood in 19th-Century America,” “William H. Johnson’s World on Paper” and “Passing Time: The Art of William Christenberry.”

The National Portrait Gallery will present six permanent exhibitions including the expanded “America’s Presidents” as well as “America Origins, 1600-1900,” and “20th Century Americans” featuring famous sports figures and entertainers. Also, the gallery will present two temporary exhibitions: “Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006,” the first U.S. national portrait competition, and “Portraiture Now.”

An exhibition on the history of the building that is co-organized by the two museums, “Temple of Invention: History of a National Landmark,” will be on view July 1 through July 8, 2007.

**About the Museums**

The Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery tells the stories of America through the individuals who have built our culture. Through the visual arts, performing arts, and new media, the Portrait Gallery portrays poets and presidents, visionaries and villains, actors and activists who speak our history. The museum’s collection of nearly 20,000 works ranges from paintings and sculpture to photographs and drawings.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is the home of the largest collection of American art in the world. Its holdings—more than 41,000 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries—tell the story of America through the visual arts and represent the most inclusive collection of American art of any museum today. It is the nation’s first federal art collection, predating the 1846 founding of the Smithsonian Institution.

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**Note to Editors:** For information visit www.reynoldscenter.org. High-resolution images of the building are available at http://newsdesk.si.edu/photos.