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Progressive Printmakers: Wisconsin Artists and the Print Renaissance

PRESS RELEASE

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Progressive Printmakers: Wisconsin Artists and the Print Renaissance

On view at the Elvehjem February 10 through April 8, 2001

The Elvehjem Museum will present an exhibition of 75 prints by artists who have been part of the vibrant print movement on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus over the past 40 years. Progressive Printmakers: Wisconsin Artists and the Print Renaissance includes the work of artists who taught, studied, or served as visiting artists at the UW–Madison Department of Art and artists who worked at the UW–Madison's Tandem Press, thus chronicling the history of both.

When former WPA artist Alfred Sessler joined the UW Department of Art faculty in 1946, the print area began to flourish. Sessler's enthusiasm for printmaking and dedication to the medium caused the department to add courses in etching and blockprinting, woodcut, wood engraving, and lithography. Over the next two decades Sessler was joined by innovative and talented artists Warrington Colescott, Jack Damer, Raymond Gloeckler, Walter Hamady, Dean Meeker, and William Weege, who extended the limits of the print medium. Artists Frances Myers and David Becker, who joined the faculty in the 1980s, continued to teach and produce both established and new techniques.

While these artists were imparting to a new generation the time-honored techniques of traditional printmaking, they were also creating new ways to make prints. UW–Madison's print faculty developed several major innovations in printmaking: Dean Meeker invented a high pressure printing press that was lightweight and easily portable; Walter Hamady began a renaissance papermaking in the 1960s. Even so, the faculty also dedicated its talents to the preservation of traditional

techniques.

The department has traditionally brought in such visiting artists as Jack Beal, Wayne Thiebaud, and Krishna Reddy to lecture and work with students. William Weege offered his own innovative approaches to the print and brought visiting artists of high caliber to Madison to print editions, first at his Jones Road print shop, then at the print workshop he established at the university, Tandem Press. Visits by such well-known artists as Sam Gilliam, Robert Stackhouse, and William Wegman enable Tandem Press to support its own operations while providing students the opportunity of working with printmakers with widely varied styles.

UW–Madison’s print program has launched the career of such successful printmakers as Robert Burkert and Marko Spalatin. Other alumni continued the high-quality printmaking that they learned at Madison. Joe Wilfer formed unique collaborations between artists and printing teams at New York’s Pace Editions, and Andrew Balkin’s Madison studio produces portfolios of prints for visiting artists. The results of their efforts will also be on view.

Joint curators for the exhibition are Elvehjem curator of prints, drawings, and photographs Andrew Stevens, UW–Madison emeritus professor of art Warrington Colescott, and UW-Madison special assistant emeritus Arthur Hove. The exhibition derives from the book *Progressive Printmakers: Wisconsin Artists and the Print Renaissance* by Colescott and Hove (Madison: UW Press, 1999) that chronicles the history of the UW–Madison print program through artists’ memoirs and illustrations.

This exhibition has been made possible in part by generous grants from the Anonymous Fund, Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission with funds from the Madison Community Foundation and the Overture Foundation, and the Kohler Foundation, Inc.

The Elvehjem Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9-5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11-5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located at 800 University Avenue on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the Murray Street (north) entrance. Parking is available at the city of Madison’s Lake Street and Frances Street ramps, university lot 46 on Lake Street between Johnson and University Avenue, university lot 47 on Johnson Street between Park and Lake streets. Evening and weekend parking is also available under Grainger Hall with entrance on Brooks Street between University Avenue and Johnson streets. The Elvehjem Museum of Art will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, 608 263-4421 (voice).