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***Asheville Art Museum Unveils Interim Expansion:
Art works PRIMED***

ASHEVILLE, NC—As of March 23, 2012, the Asheville Art Museum officially unveiled *Art works PRIMED*, the Museum's interim expansion project. Since late last year, the Museum has undergone a major transformation, temporarily expanding to adjacent facilities to better accommodate the Museum's growing schedule of exhibitions and educational programming enjoyed by audiences of all ages.

Art works PRIMED entailed the renovation and relocation of the Museum Shop and Visitor Services center, as well as the addition of new exhibition galleries, a hands-on, interactive art space for children and families, a dedicated new media exhibition gallery, and an artist project space for site-specific art installations. With the opening of the interim expansion, the Museum's entrance has been redirected to the corner of Biltmore Avenue and Pack Square, helping visitors become oriented to the new main entrance of the existing and future Asheville Art Museum. More than 100 volunteers, designers, architects and artists dedicated their time, energy and expertise to the *Art works PRIMED* project and were critical to its success.

During a community-wide inauguration party for the project held on Friday, March 23, more than 500 guests gathered to celebrate the opening of several new exhibitions at the Museum (individual press kits attached separately): *Ancient Forms, Modern Minds: Contemporary Cherokee Ceramics; Artworks Project Space: Hoss Haley, Cycle; Ennead Architects: Design Process; Fire on the Mountain: Studio Glass in Western North Carolina; Prime Time: New Media Juried Exhibition.*

On Sunday, March 25, the celebration continued with a Family Day and Grand Opening of the East Wing + Art PLAYce, during which the entire community was invited to explore the Museum's new facilities, including a renovated Museum Shop and Visitor Services area as well as several new exhibitions and art installations in the Museum's existing North Wing, new East Wing and main atrium.

The Art PLAYce, a new interactive space for children in the East Wing, is a dynamic addition to the Museum's already vital educational programming, providing new opportunities for the children of WNC to grow and learn through hands-on art activities.

Acting as a creative incubator for the region, the Museum continues to create professional opportunities for artists working in and around Western North Carolina and beyond. The Museum's New Media Gallery is dedicated to developing new audiences and greater recognition for artists working in screen-based, new media art forms. This space currently features a juried exhibition showcasing the innovations of ten North Carolina artists. The Museum has also designated the Artworks Project Space for site-specific art installations, which currently houses a large-scale installation, titled *Cycle*, by local artist Hoss Haley. Enhancing the Art PLAYce are several site-specific works of art by local artists Jennifer Jessee, Kenn Kotara, Warren Perdue, Aaron Tucker and Christi Whitely, as well as contributions from Chris Slusher and Steve Parker.

The Museum's new atrium features a fine art light installation by artist Hoss Haley, as well as an eye-catching graffiti art mural titled *The Writing on the Pharaoh's Wall* by artist Gabriel Shaffer. For his unique installation, Gabriel expertly combines layers of paint, written poetry and intricate illustrations of recognizable scenes from the community. Gabriel's artistic process, which includes traditional graffiti or *tagging* techniques, furthers the growing aesthetic and cultural conversations around the use of graffiti art in the professional art world. Kevin Hogan's *Fluxmix.com* (2006) is currently projected in the East Wing; also on view in the East Wing is a unique inflatable art installation by First Restoration Services.

The developments made possible through the *Art works PRIMED* project will continue to generate anticipation and excitement for what the new Asheville Art Museum will be for the community, region and beyond. While fully utilizing new and existing spaces, the Museum and its supporters will continue their successful *Art WORKS for Asheville* Capital Campaign. With the success of the Campaign, construction of the new Museum is planned to begin in spring 2014. As the Museum embarks on these steps towards the future of the Asheville Art Museum, the continued support of the surrounding community is essential to the Museum's successful future as a leading visual arts institution in the region.

The Art works PRIMED project and inaugural exhibitions were made possible through the generous support of our sponsors and contributors: ARC; The Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass; Alex Bernstein; Beverly-Grant, Inc.; The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation; BlackBird Frame & Art; Blue Ridge Lighting Supply, Inc.; Buncombe County; Cherokee Preservation Foundation; The City of Asheville's Cultural Arts Division; Creasman's Welding; Dancing Bear Toys; The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; Ennead Architects, LLP; First Restoration Services; The Fountainhead Bookstore; G.A.S. Distributors; Darren Green & The Old Wood Company; Ray Griffin & Thom Robinson; Habitat for Humanity; Harmony Interiors, Inc.; Hoss Haley; Hilliard Family Foundation; Kevin Hogan; Jennifer Jessee; Kenn Kotara; Chuck Krekelberg; Laser Precision Cutting, Inc.; Leicester Carpet Sales; Montana Colors, North America; Mountain Paint & Decorating, Inc./Benjamin Moore Paints; the North Carolina Arts Council; North Carolina State University; Northern Tool; Old Europe; Warren Perdue; Progress

Energy; Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisan Resources (RTCAR); Susan Rhew Design; the Rotary Club of Asheville; Gabriel Shaffer; Christopher Slusher; Salem Shope Memorial Fund; Stephens Interiors; Mr. and Mrs. Hank Strauss; The Toy Box; True Blue Art Supply; Village Antiques; Ms. Ditta Weiner; Tilden White; Christy Whiteley; Windgate Charitable Foundation.

In addition, the success of this project is due to the hard work of many dedicated volunteers, as well as the Asheville Art Museum's Board of Trustees and staff.

[Corresponding high resolution images available upon request. Corresponding fact sheets attached separately]

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The Asheville Art Museum is the only nonprofit visual arts museum serving the 24 counties of Western North Carolina. Incorporated by artists in 1948, the Museum collects, preserves and interprets American art of the 20th and 21st centuries with a focus on work of significance to the Southeast.

Centrally located in downtown Asheville on Pack Square, the Museum is open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Special docent-guided tour packages are available for groups and students.

Admission to the Museum is \$8.00 for adults and \$7.00 for seniors, students with ID and for children 4-15 (children age three and younger are admitted free). Members are admitted free to the Museum.

The Asheville Art Museum is accredited by the American Association of Museums and receives general operating support from businesses, foundations and individuals, as well as from the North Carolina Arts Council, an agency funded by the State of North Carolina, and the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art. Additional support is provided by the City of Asheville and Buncombe County.

The Asheville Art Museum asks when reprinting images, please keep all artwork at their original proportions; please do not crop them or alter them disproportionately. Provided image credit information is mandatory and images are not for resale.