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**DELAWARE ART MUSEUM PRESENTS  
ANCESTRY & INNOVATION: AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLK ART  
FROM THE AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM**

Wilmington, DE (April 22, 2009)—The Delaware Art Museum presents *Ancestry & Innovation: African American Folk Art from the American Folk Art Museum*, featuring a dazzling array of quilts, paintings, and sculptures, on view May 9, 2009 – July 12, 2009. This wide-ranging exhibition explores the artistic expressions of self-taught African American artists from the rural South and the urban North. *Ancestry and Innovation: African American Art from the American Folk Art Museum* was organized by the American Folk Art Museum, New York, and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. The exhibition was made possible by MetLife Foundation.

Comprising 39 works of art in various media, *Ancestry and Innovation* spans three generations of creators. The elder artists, working in the early and mid-20th century, include Clementine Hunter, who—in her lifetime of over a hundred years—transformed the hardships of her Louisiana community into small, lively paintings. Also in this group is Sam Doyle, a Gullah artist of St. Helena, South Carolina, whose figures, many made with house paint, were often displayed in his yard. Artists now in their maturity include father and son Thornton Dial, Sr. and Thornton Dial, Jr. Their highly expressionistic works frequently refer to social conditions and relationships. Among the youngest generation's artists is Kevin Sampson, whose urban environment in Newark, New Jersey, informs his sculptures, which often honor members of his own community who have died. "I rescue other people's memories left in the objects they leave behind," he says of these almost totemic works.

Several of the exhibition's nine quilters produced their work in the 20th century, including Leola Pettway of Gee's Bend, while Mozell Benson is working today. Their quilts combine colors and patterns in both traditional and unexpected ways, exemplifying how the artists of *Ancestry and Innovation* celebrate the

ongoing contribution of African American artists to the kaleidoscope of American cultural and visual experience.

### **Press Preview**

- **Wednesday, May 6, 2009 | 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Dr. Mary F. Holahan, Curator of Collections and Exhibitions at the Delaware Art Museum and in-house curator for the *Ancestry and Innovation* exhibition, will lead a tour and answer questions. Please RSVP to Dennis Lawson by Thursday, April 30.

### **Special Events**

- **Public Lecture: “Art, Identity, and Empowerment: African American Self-Taught Artists and Their Work”**

**Saturday, May 9 | 1:00 p.m. | Free with Museum admission**

Brooke Davis Anderson, the co-curator of *Ancestry and Innovation: African American Folk Art from the American Folk Art Museum* and the Director and Curator of The Contemporary Center of the American Folk Art Museum, will discuss the artists in *Ancestry and Innovation* and explore how artmaking empowered many African American artists without formal training.

- **Ancestry and Innovation Celebration**

**Sunday, June 14, 2009 | noon – 3:00p.m. | FREE | All ages**

Learn what folk art is all about with art activities, quilt demonstrations, and storytelling performances that celebrate the *Ancestry and Innovation* exhibition. Local quilters, whose work is displayed at Blue Ball Barn, will show how quilts are made, and special guest Linda Goss will captivate family audiences with her interactive and inspiring stories.

### **Organizer and Sponsors**

*Ancestry and Innovation: African American Art from the American Folk Art Museum* was organized by the American Folk Art Museum, New York, and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. The exhibition was made possible by MetLife Foundation.

In Delaware, this exhibition is made possible, in part, by grants from the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency dedicated to nurturing and supporting the arts in Delaware, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support is provided by The Gilliam Foundation.

### **About the Museum**

Founded in 1912, the Delaware Art Museum is best known for its large collection of British Pre-Raphaelite art, works by Wilmington-native Howard Pyle and fellow American illustrators, and urban

landscapes by John Sloan and his circle. Visitors can also enjoy the outdoor Copeland Sculpture Garden and a number of major traveling exhibitions throughout the year.

Located at 2301 Kentmere Parkway, Wilmington, DE 19806, the Museum is open Wednesday through Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and Sunday noon – 4:00 p.m. Admission fees are charged as follows: Adults (19 – 59) \$12, Seniors (60+) \$10, Students (with valid ID) \$6, Youth (7 – 18) \$6, and Children (6 and under) free. Admission fees are waived every Sunday thanks to support from AstraZeneca. For more information, call 302-571-9590 or 866-232-3714 (toll free), or visit the website at [www.delart.org](http://www.delart.org).

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