

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PHILADELPHIA (February 18, 2015)—La Salle University Art Museum is pleased to present the exhibitions ***Elizabeth Catlett: Art for Social Justice*** and ***Mexican People: Lithographs of the Taller de Gráfica Popular***, on view March 11 – June 4, 2015.

Elizabeth Catlett: Art for Social Justice

This exhibition features 24 prints, mixed media, and sculptures by Elizabeth Catlett (1915-2012), an African American/Mexican artist whose works often addressed themes of social justice. Many of the artworks illustrate Catlett's concern for equal rights for African Americans as well as indigenous Mexicans; affirm Black identity, motherhood, and family; and celebrate a future of miscegenation and racial harmony. Some also address the rights of all humans to have access to basic needs such as food and literacy.

Catlett made conscious choices in her life and her art to advocate for the rights of both African American and indigenous Mexicans. Born in Washington D.C. to middle-class parents, Catlett grew up listening to her grandmother recount stories about her youth as a slave. After graduating from Howard University in 1935, Catlett studied with regionalist artist Grant Wood at the University of Iowa, earning an MFA in sculpture in 1940. She married the social realist artist Charles White and moved to New York City in 1942 where she associated with other black artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance. Inspired by the progressive social work of Mexican muralists and printmakers, Catlett travelled to Mexico City in 1946 on a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship to work on a print series called *I am the Negro Woman*. There she became involved with the *Taller de Gráfica Popular* (People's Graphic Workshop, TGP), a print collective very involved with social causes. After ending her marriage with White, she settled in Mexico, married fellow TGP Mexican artist Francisco Mora, and had three sons. She became the first woman professor in the sculpture department at Mexico City's National Autonomous University's School of Fine Arts. While living in Mexico, Catlett continued to exhibit in the United States, creating artworks that addressed themes of racial justice and equality. Her solo exhibition in 1971 at the Studio Museum in Harlem brought her to the attention of American audiences involved in the emerging Black Arts movement. Her interest in race, ethnicity, and gender, and her respect for the dignity of the common working people, particularly oppressed groups, also captured the attention of the wider American public. Her later artwork of the 1990s and 2000s often addressed themes of diversity and multiculturalism, intergenerational communication, and hope for a future of equality for all people.

The exhibition includes eight fine art prints from the collection of La Salle University Art Museum and 16 artworks on loan from private collectors, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Sragow Gallery in New York, and Hampton University Museum in Virginia. The exhibition will present a contextual overview of Catlett's progression as an artist, encompassing her work in Harlem in the early 1940s, her famous *Negro Woman* series of 1946-1947, her prints of indigenous Mexicans made with the TGP in the 1950s and 1960s, her Black power prints and sculptures of the 1970s, 1980s and beyond, and her colorful prints of the 1990s and 2000s. Visitors will learn about Catlett's life journey and her dedication to promoting social justice for oppressed minorities.

Mexican People: Lithographs of the Taller de Gráfica Popular

This complementary exhibition features a complete portfolio of 12 lithographs published in 1946 in an edition of 250 by the Associated American Artists in New York. The portfolio aimed to showcase the labor that went into products that were exported from Mexico into the United States. The TGP artists received funds to travel to the provinces in Mexico to witness people at work in the rural areas of the country. The location of the scenes depicted in the prints is indicated on the illustrated map of Mexico, which is also on display. Each print is accompanied by text written by the artists in 1946.

The exhibitions are co-curated by Klare Scarborough, Ph.D., Director and Chief Curator of La Salle University Art Museum; and Mey-Yen Moriuchi, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Art History at La Salle University and a specialist in Latin American Art.

Exhibition Programs

The Opening Reception for both exhibitions will take place on Wednesday, March 11, 2015, from 5 to 7 p.m. Immediately preceding the Opening Reception, Dr. Scarborough and Dr. Moriuchi will give a Curators' Introduction to the exhibitions at 4 p.m.

Other programs include the following:

On March 25 at 3 p.m. an Explorer Café entitled "Art and Community: Do Artists and Museums have a Social Responsibility?" presented by Miranda Clark-Binder, Curator of Education and Public Programs and Mey-Yen Moriuchi, Ph.D.; and on April 20 at 12 noon John Ittmann, Curator of Prints at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Peter Schneider, an independent scholar and collector of Mexican prints, will present a lecture entitled "The Taller de Gráfica Popular and the Mexican People Portfolio."

Supporters of the exhibitions and related programs include the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Brother Daniel Burke Endowment Fund, the Art Angels, and La Salle University's Department of Art History, Department of Social Work, the Multicultural and International Center, Latin American Studies, and the Concert and Lecture Series.

The La Salle University Art Museum is located on the lower level of Olney Hall on the campus of La Salle University at 19th Street and Olney Avenue. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Art Museum will also be open from 12 noon to 3 p.m. on the following Saturdays: April 11, April 18, and May 16. Admission is free, though donations are accepted. Please call to schedule group visits. Special tours can be arranged. For further information call 215.951.1221 or visit the website at <http://www.lasalle.edu/museum/>. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.