

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PHILADELPHIA (February 13, 2013) – Philadelphians will be offered a special artistic treat this spring, with celebratory exhibitions of artwork by Charles Searles, a significant African American artist from Philadelphia, on display at several local institutions.

Charles Searles (1937 - 2004) was an important African American artist from Philadelphia, educated at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), who was active from the 1960s until his death. Searles received both the Cresson Memorial Travel Scholarship and the Ware Memorial Travel Scholarship while at PAFA. Searles used the Ware Scholarship to travel to West Africa in the early 1970s, at a time when many African American artists were exploring their ancestral African roots. His artwork reflected not only the changing social times but also his evolving vision as an individual inspired by Africa, who came to embrace universal cross-cultural connections. Over the course of his artistic development, Searles created paintings and sculptures that responded to a variety of cultural traditions – African, Japanese, Indian, etc. – and included abstract references to music as well as dance. More information about Charles Searles may be found on the website of Philadelphia artist Kathleen Spicer (Searles' widow): <http://www.kathleenspicer.com/>.

Two major exhibitions, at La Salle University Art Museum and at Tyler School of Art (both described below), were developed in conjunction with parallel exhibition seminar courses held during fall 2012. Students learned about Charles Searles; wrote text panels and labels for the exhibitions; conducted original research; and produced scholarly essays for a collaborative exhibition catalogue (publication forthcoming). The exhibitions laid the groundwork for the public celebrations of Searles' artwork this spring.

Charles Searles: The Mask of Abstraction, on view March 11 – May 31, 2013 at the La Salle University Art Museum. Opening reception, March 13, 2013, 5-7 p.m. at the La Salle University Art Museum.

La Salle University Art Museum will feature 52 paintings, small-scale sculptures, and sketchbook drawings by Charles Searles, loaned from private collections, in the Special Exhibitions Gallery, the Main Display Cases, and the 20th Century Hallway. The exhibition will provide visitors with an overview of Searles' artistic development, from his early figure drawings of the 1960s to his abstract paintings and sculptures of the 1970s and beyond, as his artwork progressed into formal abstraction.

Charles Searles: The Mask of Abstraction was developed through a La Salle University Fine Arts Department exhibition seminar taught by Art Museum Director and Chief Curator Dr. Klare Scarborough. The seminar engaged five undergraduate students from La Salle University: Carlos Contente, Meredith Dean, Irene Martinez, Kelly Sheehan, and Taylor Strickland; and three undergraduate students from Chestnut Hill College: Christopher Dunn, Emily Lukasiewicz, Westly Mandoske. The students wrote text panels; participated in the exhibition layout; and produced scholarly essays for the exhibition catalogue.

Programming for the exhibition will include a public illustrated lecture about Charles Searles by his widow Kathleen Spicer (<http://www.kathleenspicer.com/>) on March 14, 2013, from 1-2pm; and a public lecture by Philadelphia gallery owner Sande Webster (<http://www.sandewebstergallery.com/>) on April 11, 2013, from 1-2pm. Both of these lectures will take place in Olney Hall 100, on the main campus of La Salle University. The exhibition will also be accompanied by a variety of free educational programs for adults as well as pre-K-12 school groups.

Supporters and co-sponsors of the exhibition and related programs include The Philadelphia Cultural Fund; the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; the Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation; La Salle University Art Museum's Art Angels; and La Salle University's Concert and Lecture Series, Fine Arts Department, American Studies Department, School of Business, Greater Philadelphia Initiative, and Multicultural and International Center.

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 to the public from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on four upcoming Saturdays: April 6, April 13, April 20, and May 18. 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/>.

Charles Searles: In Motion, on view April 20 – June 16, 2013, in the Atrium of Tyler School of Art, Temple University. Opening reception, April 20, 2013, 5:30-7:00pm, at Tyler School of Art.

Temple University's Tyler School of Art will offer an in-depth look at significant aspects of Searles' work to reveal underlying impulses of continual movement and transformation, both conceptually and stylistically. Interpretive text panels for 17 large-scale paintings and sculptures, a student-produced video, and exhibition catalogue essays examine key experiences that inspired significant change in Searles' thinking and working processes; the stylistic transformation of the figure toward gesture and abstraction; the inherent energy and motion of the city as relevant to Searles' own experiences in Philadelphia; and Searles' development and transitions among media, from drawing to painting and sculpture, as well as in the combination of approaches in his three-dimensional work.

Charles Searles: In Motion was developed in an Exhibition Studies seminar under the direction of Susanna Gold, Assistant Professor of Art History. MA, MEd, and PhD students Alicia Bonilla-Puig, Alexander Cohn, Louise Feder, Elise Houck, Rachel McCay, Nicole Restaino, William Schwaller, and James Short were involved in all curatorial, creative, and scholarly decisions.

The exhibition will be introduced by a Cross-Disciplinary Arts Symposium, "Call and Response," which will feature artists, performers, and scholars from different branches of the creative arts. Taking a cue from the music and dance rhythms that influenced Searles, the symposium uses Searles' work as a springboard to further investigate interactions among visual art, music, dance, and performance. Participants include keynote speaker Michael D. Harris (Art History), Karimu Welsh (choreography), Marie Chiment (costume design), Maya Freelon Asante (set design), Sophie Sanders (Art History), Kimmika Williams-Witherspoon (performance poetry), John Dowell (printmaking), and Robert Jason Jackson (theatrical monologue). The symposium will be held on Saturday, April 20, 2013, 1:00-5:30pm

in the Conwell Dance Theater, and will be immediately followed by the exhibition's opening reception, April 20, 2013, 5:30-7:00pm, at the Tyler School of Art.

Supporters and co-sponsors of the exhibition and related programs include the Temple University Commission on the Arts/Office of the Vice Provost for the Arts; Art History Department, Tyler School of Art; Tyler Student Life General Activities Fund; Dance Department, Boyer College of Music and Dance; Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection; Tyler Alumni Board; and Temple University's Faculty Senate Lectures & Forums Committee, African American Studies Department, and Honor's Program.

Tyler School of Art is located on the Main campus of Temple University at 12th and Norris Streets. Hours are 6:30 a.m.-10:30 p.m., daily. Conwell Dance Theater is located on the 5th floor of Conwell Hall, 1801 N. Broad Street. Both events are free and open to the public, with ID. For further information call Susanna Gold at 610-368-6927 or visit the website at www.temple.edu/tyler.

Charles Searles: A Focus on the Figure, on view March 25 – June 15, 2013, at Woodmere Art Museum.

The Woodmere Art Museum will offer a focused investigation of Charles Searles' early works that showcase his interest in the human figure. The selected works will introduce this little-known phase of Searles' work, and offer an opportunity for visitors to note his facility with different drawing media. Organized by theme, the show allows viewers to witness Searles' portrayal of his family, images inspired by some of the urban characters he encountered, and his nude model studies. Through these works the public can see the variety of styles with which Searles experimented and how his figurative art evolved as he engaged with form.

Curated by Maite Barragan, PhD candidate in Art History, Tyler School of Art, Temple University.

Woodmere Art Museum is located at 9201 Germantown Avenue. Admission to special exhibitions is \$10 for adults, \$7 for seniors, and FREE for students, children and Museum members; exhibitions in the Founder's Gallery and Helen Millard Children's Gallery are FREE. Museum hours are Tuesday through Thursday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m.–8:45 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. For more information, visit woodmereartmuseum.org or call 215-247-0476.

New Depths (1989), a large wall sculpture by Charles Searles, on view from January through May at the Tuttleman Sculpture Gallery of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) is pleased to feature work by noted alumnus Charles Searles. An accomplished artist, Searles attended PAFA from 1967 to 1972 and was the recipient of two prestigious awards: the William Emlen Cresson Memorial Travel Scholarship in 1971, and the Lewis S. Ware Memorial Travel Scholarship in 1972. He used funds from the latter award to travel to Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa.

Searles' artwork is represented in numerous private, corporate, and public collections including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Smithsonian Institute of American Art, the National Center of Afro-American Artists, the Dallas Museum of Art, and many others. Over the course of his career, he participated in 25 solo exhibitions and over 60 group shows, both national and international. He was represented for many years by the Sande Webster Gallery in Philadelphia.

New Depths is an evocative work produced by Searles after he moved from Philadelphia to New York City. The sculpture is enigmatic in its figural abstraction and, like similar mature works such as *Sailing Along* (1991), displays Searles' complex compositional arrangement of complementary colors and overlapping forms. The work is on display in the Tuttleman Sculpture Gallery through the end of May.

Founded in 1805, PAFA is America's first school of fine arts and museum. A recipient of the 2005 National Medal of Arts presented by the President of the United States, PAFA is a recognized leader in fine arts education. Nearly every major American artist has taught, studied, or exhibited at the Academy. The institution's world-class collection of American art continues to grow and provides what only a few other art institutions in the world offer: the rare combination of an outstanding museum and an extraordinary faculty known for its commitment to students and for the stature and quality of its artistic work.

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts is located on North Broad Street between Arch and Race Streets. The Tuttleman Sculpture gallery is part of The Samuel M.V. Hamilton Building, 128 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Admission is \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors (60+)/students (with ID), \$10 for youth (12-8), and free to members and children under 12 (excluding school groups). Hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. For more information, visit <http://www.pafa.org/> or call 215-972-7600.
