

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ISABELLA
SEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM**

**Twelfth Annual *Community Creations* Exhibition Showcases Artworks
Created by Local Students and Inspired by the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum**

*Gardner Museum hosts a celebration of original artworks created by students from the Fenway,
Roxbury, Dorchester, and Jamaica Plain, in conjunction with area artists*



**On View June 5-13, 2010 | FREE with museum admission
Opening Reception: Friday, June 4, 5-8pm | FREE for all**

MAY 12, 2010, BOSTON • This June, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum looks to the future, celebrating the fresh perspectives of young local artists in its annual *Community Creations* student exhibition. The exhibition will be on view from June 5 to 13, and all are invited to a free opening reception on Friday, June 4, from 5-8pm.

Continuing the legacy of support for emerging artists and the tradition of community involvement begun by Isabella Stewart Gardner herself, the *Community Creations* exhibition is the culminating event of an entire year spent looking at, learning about, drawing inspiration from, and creating art at the Gardner through the museum's *Community Partnership Program*. This unique collaboration involves students from seven local community organizations, including the **Dorchester Alternative School** (Dorchester), **Fenway High School** (Fenway), **Hawthorne Youth and Community Center** (Roxbury), **Knight Children's Center** (Jamaica Plain), **Little House Alternative School** (Dorchester), **Mother Caroline Academy** (Dorchester), and **Peace Drum Project** (Jamaica Plain), as well as teens from the Gardner's own *Teens-Behind-the-Scenes* and *Museum Associates* programs.

"During her lifetime, Isabella Gardner encouraged creativity in young people from the Boston community, enriching their lives and sharing her appreciation of art and beauty with future generations," says **Anne Hawley**, *Norma Jean Calderwood Director* of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. "A century later, the Gardner Museum remains committed to furthering this legacy through programs like *Community Creations*, which foster the artistic talents of our city's youth and celebrate the connections they have made with art, each other, and Isabella Gardner's collection."

Community Partnership Program students—ranging in age from 7 through 18—experience an in-depth, multi-visit approach to learning at the Gardner Museum. Students visit and explore the museum's galleries regularly over the

course of the school year, learning to look closely at art and develop their own opinions. Toward the end of their tenure at the museum, they are encouraged to draw inspiration from these experiences to create original two- and three-dimensional works of art for the *Community Creations* exhibition. At the end of the exhibition, each work of art is returned to the community organization for permanent display, serving as a continual reminder of the students' time at the Gardner.

“Community Creations has let my imagination go outside of the box to make a creative piece,” says *Museum Associate Wayne Zhang*. “I am enjoying this entire process because the group that I work with is phenomenal.”

This year, participating students drew inspiration from the Gardner Museum's permanent collection as well as the contemporary exhibition *Taro Shinoda: Lunar Reflections* (Fall 2009) and the scholarly exhibition *Modeling Devotion: Terracotta Sculpture of the Italian Renaissance* (on view through the end of May) to create a diverse array of artworks. For example, the Dorchester Alternative School group was inspired by their discussion of symbols in the Veronese Room's painted ceiling to create plaster casts of their arms and faces that they will cover with symbols and patterns of personal and cultural relevance. Both the Hawthorne Youth and Community Center group and the Little House Alternative School students will draw on the museum's central courtyard as their muse, reinterpreting it in a three-dimensional model of the space and foil-embossed drawings of the courtyard's natural and architectural elements. The Gardner's *Museum Associates* and *Teens-Behind-the-Scenes* were inspired by Taro Shinoda's contemporary exhibition *Lunar Reflections* to create a piece that incorporates light and silhouette reflections.

EXHIBITION OPENING RECEPTION ■ *Community Creations* opens on Friday, June 4, with a free evening celebration from 5-8pm. Guests will enjoy looking activities throughout the museum, refreshments, and live music by Jamaica Plain-based ensemble Zili Misik, recently described by *The Boston Globe* as “unlike any other act in Boston...a feast for the senses.” Members of the community—in addition to friends and family of the student artists—are invited to join the celebration. The students' work remains on view in the special exhibition gallery through June 13.

This celebration of the role of the historic collection as a springboard for new, vibrant creative thinking and community engagement will—appropriately—be the final exhibition in the Gardner's current special exhibition gallery within the historic museum building. The gallery will be closed at the end of June, to allow for preparatory and preservation work in the galleries related to the construction of the museum's new wing. The Renzo Piano-designed wing will include a new 2,000 square foot exhibition space featuring an entire north wall of glass, a skylight with micro louvers, and a movable ceiling to allow for the presentation of intimately-scaled as well as larger contemporary and historic exhibitions. More information about the project is available online at <http://www.buildingproject.gardnermuseum.org>.

COLLABORATING ARTISTS ■ *Community Partnership* students collaborate with Gardner Museum education staff, two high school *Museum Associates*, and local artists in creating the art for the exhibition. This year, students from Hawthorne Youth & Community Center are working with artists **Wendy Ellertson** (<http://www.ellertson.com/>) and **Paul Babbitt** from Roxbury; students from Dorchester Alternative School are working with **Ruth Rieffanaugh** from Allston (www.artmajeur.com/ruth); students from the Knight Children's Center are working with **Alex McShane** (www.alexmcshane.com); students from the Peace Drum Project are working with Roxbury-based textile artist **Susan Thompson** (<http://www.susanthompson.net/>); and students from Mother Caroline Academy are working with **Lindsey Kocur**. The opportunity to collaborate with a professional artist from the community offers added inspiration for the students' own artistic journeys.

TEENS-BEHIND-THE-SCENES AND MUSEUM ASSOCIATES ■ This year's *Community Creations* exhibition will also include new works of art created by the Gardner Museum's *Teens-Behind-the-Scenes* and *Museum Associates*. These programs offer a group of highly motivated, energetic and committed teens the rare opportunity to go “behind the scenes” of the museum to experience how conservation, education, security, landscape, and curatorial departments operate. At the museum, *Teens-Behind-the-Scenes* plan and implement innovative programs for their peers in the community through networking and dynamic community professionals, and have the chance to meet and work with professional artists from all over the world who come to the Gardner as part of the museum's *Artist-in-Residence* program. This year, there are six *Teens-Behind-the-Scenes*. In addition, every year, two *Museum Associates* are also selected to collaborate with Johnetta Tinker, *Director of Community Programs*, and assist with *Community Partnership* activities and public events at the museum throughout the year.

SAVE THE DATE! NEIGHBORHOOD NIGHTS ■ The community fun continues through the summer! Mark your calendars for the Gardner Museum's popular *Neighborhood Nights* programs this summer on Thursday evenings: July 8, July 22, and August 5 from 5-8pm. These free evening events feature art, music, and fun—and families are welcome!

EDUCATION AT THE GARDNER MUSEUM • *Celebrating Creativity and Community*

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's award-winning education department, headed by the National Art Education Association (NAEA)'s 2002 *Art Educator of the Year* **Margaret Burchenal**, strives to provide visiting students from the local community and school partnership program groups with innovative, sustained interactions with the collection to foster a life-long love and appreciation of great art. In 2007, the Gardner Museum completed an important three year, Department Of Education (DOE)-funded study into the effects of arts education on the development of critical thinking skills in young children. The study found that elementary school students from Boston public schools who visited the Gardner repeatedly to learn to look at and talk about art showed significant improvements in critical thinking skills crucial for learning. Gains in skills including close observation, interpretation, and problem solving demonstrate that visiting museums is a valuable learning experience for school-age children, and complements the education they receive in school. More information about this study and the importance of arts in education is available online at: <http://www.gardnermuseum.org/education/tta/tta.html>.

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM • 280 The Fenway Boston MA 02115 617.566.1401 www.gardnermuseum.org • Tue.-Sun., 11 am-5 pm • \$12 adults; \$10 seniors; \$5 students; \$2 off with same-day Museums of Fine Arts admission; FREE members, children under 18, all named "Isabella", and everyone on his/her birthday • Built in the style of a 15th-century Venetian palazzo, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is a magical place, unlike any other museum in the world. With three floors of galleries displaying over 30 centuries of art surrounding a lush indoor courtyard garden, this unique space fires the imagination and offers a one-of-a-kind experience and opportunity for learning and engagement with the arts.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Reporters and photographers are invited to attend and cover the exhibition opening reception on Friday, June 4 from 5-8pm. Students and teachers **from multiple Boston neighborhoods** who are involved in the *Community Partnership, Museum Associates, and Teens-Behind-the-Scenes* programs are available to talk about their experiences and their art before and during the event.

Please contact the press office for more information. A museum photographer will also be in attendance at the opening event, and we are happy to provide those images/captions to you for your consideration.