

NEWS RELEASE

University of Maine
Museum of Art

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Digital images available

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ART EXHIBITION **October 21, 2005 - January 14, 2006**

Bangor, Maine - The University of Maine Museum of Art is pleased to present two new exhibitions at Norumbega Hall in downtown Bangor: A quilt show titled **No Two Alike African-American Improvisations on A Traditional Patchwork Pattern** and black & white Photographs by **Melonie Bennett**.

No Two Alike African-American Improvisations on A Traditional Patchwork Pattern

Improvisation is a defining and intriguing characteristic of the province of African-American quilting that suggests its African roots. Only in the last quarter of the 20th century has this art form received scholarly and critical attention while much of the genre remains to be explored. *No Two Alike: African-American Improvisations on a Traditional Patchwork Pattern* featured 18 quilts from the extraordinary collection of Eli Leon, a quilt scholar and resident of Oakland, California.

African-American improvisational style is an overall approach to organizing visual space and elements such as color, line and shape – an approach based on cultural preferences and tradition infused with a sense of impromptu innovation. The artists in *No Two Alike*, 20th century African-American quiltmakers, speak of making the quilts “something of your own,” of piecing “something different from someone else.” Each quiltmaker is talking of style, of the individuality and personality expressed through her work. Style as an individual expression was even more pronounced in this exhibit where the organizational focus was on specific improvisations in the “Square-in-a-Square” pattern. The exhibition catalogue for *No Two Alike* included an essay by Eli Leon which addressed the concept of improvisation, with careful analysis of the design and individual inventiveness of each quilter. His interviews with the quilters also informed the biographies he has written of each of the artists.

No Two Alike, comprised of exhibition quality African-American “Square-in-a-Square” quilts displaying varying forms and degrees of improvisation, was intended as both an exposition and a celebration of African-American improvisation. The quilts in *No Two Alike* were made in the 1960s through 1990s by 20 quilters, most of whom grew up in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. Many of them currently live in San Francisco bay area, Texas, and Louisiana.

Beginning in 1988, Eli Leon has loaned works from his collection and curated notable exhibitions including *Who'd A Thought It: Improvisation in African-American Quilting*, *Models in the Mind: African Prototypes in American Patchwork*, and *Something Else To See: Improvisational Bordering Styles In African-American Quilts*.

Melonie Bennett is a Maine born photographer who has watched her family and friends through the lens of her camera for over 15 years. “My photography is an ongoing visual diary of my family and friends and the times we share together,” she writes in an artist’s statement. “I developed my point of view growing up on a diary farm in Gorham, Maine.” The humor in her work, along with the deep affection she feels for her subjects, sets Bennett’s candid, black and white photographs apart from those of her documentation peers. These images are intimate invitations into the daily lives of one big boisterous rural Maine family. Bennett, who emerged on the Maine art scene in the mid 1990s, has exhibited throughout the state, in galleries in New York City, and around the Northeast.



Museum of Art

www.umma.umaine.edu

Hours: Monday – Saturday 9 am – 5 pm

Admission: \$3.00 per person

No charge for Museum Members and UM students with Maine Card

Directions

From the North

I-95, Exit 48 - Broadway, (Bangor, Brewer)

Turn left at light onto Broadway, Rt. 15

At the 4th light (1.2 m), turn right on to State St., Rt. 2

At the light at the bottom of the hill (.1 m), turn right on to Harlow St. (a one-way street)

Merge into left lane, turn left into parking lot of Norumbega Hall.

From the South

I-95, Exit 48 - Broadway, (Bangor, Brewer)

Turn left at light on to Broadway, Rt 15.

At the 3rd light (1.1 m), turn right on to State St., Rt. 2

At the light at the bottom of the hill (.1 m), turn right on to Harlow St. (a one-way street)

Merge into left lane, turn left into parking lot of Norumbega Hall.

For additional information, please call 561.3350.