



FIREHOUSE COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER

NEWS RELEASE

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RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBIT OF THE WORKS OF LEONARD WEST OPENS AT FIREHOUSE ART GALLERY-- JUNE 24

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – The FireHouse Art Gallery will celebrate the work of artist Leonard D. West with a Retrospective Exhibit of his paintings, photographs and mixed-media assemblages. The art show and sale will kick off with a reception on **Friday, June 24, 2011 from 6-9 p.m.** at the **FireHouse Community Arts Center** located at 985 South Bellevue. Presented by the Memphis Black Arts Alliance (MBAA), the exhibit will be on display from June 24 through the month of July or until a new exhibit opens. For more information, contact the Alliance at 901.948.9522 or send an email to info@memphisblackartsalliance.org.

The current exhibit, which opened May 27 and displayed through June 23, features the works of Dail Chambers, Marcellous Lovelace, Darlene Newman, Carl E. Moore and Frank Robinson. FireHouse Community Arts Center is the headquarters of the Memphis Black Arts Alliance. The goal of the FireHouse Art Gallery is to promote and sell unique works of art primarily by African American artists. Coordinated by artist Carl Moore, new exhibits will be presented monthly or bimonthly throughout the summer months. Moreover, the opening receptions are scheduled for the last Friday at FireHouse Art Gallery to tie in with Trolley Night in the nearby South Main Historical District, said Bennie Nelson West, MBAA executive director.

The Artist

Leonard D. West is a painter, printmaker, sculptor and photographer whose art reflects his feelings and values which arise from his diverse personal experiences. Born in Chickasha, Oklahoma, of Black and Native American heritage, West grew up in Los Angeles in the 40's. His broad life experiences include that of a bohemian-beatnik in the 50's; seven years living among the people of rural Nara and 20 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. A student and practitioner of Zen Buddhism in the tradition of Thich Nah Hahn, he moved to Memphis in 1974 and worked as a graphic artist for a Memphis-based international corporation. His art studies began in Laguna Beach California and continued at the Yuma Art Center under Professor Ray Fink and at University of Arizona at Tempe, Santa Anna College, Montserrat College of Art in Beverly, Mass., Memphis College of Art and the Santa Fe College of Art. He immersed himself in photography while on tour of duty in Viet Nam and upon his move to Memphis worked closely with legendary photojournalist Ernest Withers while focusing on the traditions and rituals of Southern blacks and the performance energy of local and nationally renowned jazz and blues musicians.

(more)



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At age 60, he returned to his painter's roots while a full-time student at the Memphis College of Art. However, as an artist, West is unlimited by media and freely works as a painter, printmaker, sculptor and photographer. He works quickly, spontaneously, intuitively using his feelings, and love for color, line and design and spiritual principles to create. "While I approach my art of thirty-plus years, playfully, I seek to reflect the joy and wonder of 'little people' (i.e. children) and my enduring faith in the power of spiritual evolution to transform humanity," said West who has taught children at the Memphis College of Art Saturday School and Summer program, the Memphis Black Arts Alliance's FireHouse Community Arts Academy, Blues City Cultural Center, Memphis Arts in the Park "Artist in Action" and at LeMoyné-Owen College.

His work has been exhibited in numerous solo and group shows locally and across the country including: the Ledbetter Lusk and David Lusk Gallery, Taylor's Contemporary Fine Art Gallery in Hot Springs, Ark., the H.B. Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Ky., the Atlanta International Museum, the Tennessee State Museum and ArtSynergy in Nashville. A frequent contributor to charity events, West's work has been auctioned and sold at the annual Blues Ball, Heart Gala and Memphis Ballet Nutcracker Art Auction. His work is in the collection of individuals and corporations, including Promus Hotel, Dobbs Ford, Union Planters National Bank, Chuck Hutton Chevrolet, Mr. & Mrs. David Jaqua (Memphis) Dr. David Driskell (Falmouth, Maine), Roslyn Willett (New York) and the Urban Arts Commission.

Founded in 1982, Memphis Black Arts Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit agency that offers cultural performing arts and visual community arts education for all ages, special events, tours, gallery exhibits. The FireHouse Community Arts Center and Academy, the headquarters of the Memphis Black Arts Alliance, is located in a converted 1910 fire station at the gateway to Soulsville USA, the historic African-American neighborhood of Memphis's music, education, religious and business legends from the community. Memphis Black Arts Alliance has employed more than 300 professional artists-performers and attracted more than 500,000 as visitors, students, audiences, supporters and volunteers from around the region and the nation. MBAA is supported by the Tennessee Arts Commission, other public and private agencies and tax-deductible donations from individuals and businesses. For information on ways to donate or volunteer, contact Bennie Nelson West, executive director, at 901-948-9522 or bennie@memphisblackartsalliance.org.

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