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IMPRINT

A Public Art Project, September 3 – November 9, 2002

IMPRINT, Philadelphia's first major billboard exhibition and the city's largest temporary public art project to date, is supported with a \$181,516 grant awarded by the Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, a program funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and administered by The University of the Arts, Philadelphia. "The concept of IMPRINT comes directly from its definition: *The act of making an indelible impression on the senses and the mind*. Each public site (billboards, bus shelters, newspapers, coffee cups) uses the multiplicity of the print to reach the public on familiar turf - driving, buying coffee and reading the newspaper. These sites, usually used for commercial advertising, offer an ideal format for public art. They offer the advantage of art embedded within the context of daily life, bringing art to people rather than people to art. By subverting expectation, they offer an idea rather than sell a product," according to project curator Joan Wadleigh Curran.

"Several other major cities including New York, Los Angeles and Vienna, have staged billboard exhibitions, but the diversity of sites offered by IMPRINT exceeds them all," said Print Center Executive Director Christine Filippone, "IMPRINT will bring art and ideas to more than 14 million people." The six artists chosen for IMPRINT each deal with issues in their work pertinent to the public discourse: aging, race and ethnicity, gender and class. The artists whose work will be on display simultaneously are Kerry James Marshall (Chicago, IL), John Coplans (New York, NY), Dotty Attie (New York, NY), James Mills (Philadelphia, PA), Virgil Marti (Philadelphia, PA) and Susan Fenton (Philadelphia, PA). Beginning in September, their work will be seen:

- **On forty sites: billboards and bus shelters** in the Greater Philadelphia area, the Main Line, King of Prussia, Oxford Valley and Cherry Hill, NJ; The primary billboards will be located on major expressways: 76, 676, 95, Rt. 1 and 291.
- **On 300,000 paper coffee cups** to be distributed free with coffee purchased at coffee shops throughout the city of Philadelphia and at the cafés of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art.

- **In six full-page, full-color “collectible prints” in the Philadelphia Inquirer’s Sunday Magazine**, one per week, for six consecutive weeks (September 8 – October 13).
- The artists will conceptually unite the three public components of the project in installations of their work at The Print Center.

About the Artists:

The participatory artists were selected based on their varying approaches to printmaking and/or photography, and for the issue-related content of their work.

Dotty Attie's paintings and prints juxtapose images and text in order to pose questions about their paired meaning. Her images create a provocative visual narrative that encourages the viewer to contemplate new meanings based on their own experience. Attie's work is familiar to a national audience through exhibitions at such venues as the Museum of Modern Art and the Brooklyn Museum.

John Coplans makes large-scale photographs of his aging body. His arresting photographs shatter conventional expectations. They call attention to our discomfort with the aging process by presenting images of the aging body rather than the conventions of youth and beauty. Coplan's images are internationally known as critic and former editor of Artforum magazine.

Susan Fenton hand-colors her photographs of figures in controlled environments suffused with mystery. Fenton's images flirt with the conventions of fashion and advertising and create powerful allegories about the relationship between beauty and adornment of the human form and its power to transform. Fenton's photographs are well known both locally and nationally. She is on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania and Saint Joseph's University.

Kerry James Marshall uses the format of the comic book to present aspects of contemporary African American life, and to confront contradictions inherent in American life. In his comic book project, "Rhythm Mastr," Marshall uses figures from African art as superheroes who battle the forces of corruption and violence against the backdrop of urban decay. Winner of the prestigious MacArthur Prize (1997), the Chicago based artist's work has been included in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of Art and Documenta X in Kassel, Germany.

Virgil Marti's work addresses the relationship between art and mass culture, good and bad taste, nostalgia and issues of class. Marti's images of bonsai trees use the seductive conventions of advertising to present images of stylized nature, displaced yet beautiful, full of tenderness and saturated color. Marti has received a Louis Comfort Tiffany Fellowship and a Pew Fellowship.

James Mills combines text and context to surprise the complacent viewer and pose questions about the role of art and advertising. In his sculpture and installations, Mills uses commonplace words in different contexts to encourage new thinking about the realities of life. Mills has recently shown his work at the ICA in Philadelphia, and has received a Pew Fellowship.

To coincide with IMPRINT, The Philadelphia Print Collaborative presents the festival 'Image & Print: A Contemporary Conversation with History.' www.printcollaborative.org. **The Philadelphia Print Collaborative presents *Image & Print: A Contemporary Conversation with History*, from September 20 to October 19, 2002.** *Image & Print* exhibitions and programs expand on IMPRINT themes by examining printmaking's historic role in the public debate of ideas and how these traditions are recontextualized by contemporary artists. The public-art-extravaganza-kick-off-event for the festival, BROADSTREET BROADSIDE, will steamroll a 200 foot long print with hundreds of artists and volunteers!

Located at 1614 Latimer Street, in the heart of Center City Philadelphia, The Print Center supports printmaking and photography as vital contemporary arts. The Print Center presents a variety of programs for the public including 13 exhibitions annually; The Print Center Gallery Store offering the largest and most diverse selection of contemporary prints in Philadelphia; the longest running annual international competition for prints and photographs in the country; an extensive series of continuing education programs; and special events.

This project has been supported by grants from the Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, a program funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and administered by The University of the Arts, Philadelphia, The Berwind Corporation, Stockton Rush Bartol Foundation, and Beneficial Savings Bank. The Pew Charitable Trusts support nonprofit activities in the areas of culture, education, the environment, health and human services, public policy and religion. Based in Philadelphia, the Trusts make strategic investments to help organizations and citizens develop practical solutions to difficult problems.