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SPECIAL EVENTS, EXHIBITIONS CELEBRATE SAMA'S 40th ANNIVERSARY

Loretto – The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art celebrates an important milestone this year as the Museum recognizes its 40th anniversary. In June 1976, the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Loretto first opened its doors to the public. At the time, the permanent collection consisted of 47 paintings, drawings and sculpture, plus a collection of 20 etchings by John Sloan. Led by Director Michael Strueber and Board of Trustees President Fr. Sean M. Sullivan, T.O.R., then President of Saint Francis College, the Museum enjoyed significant early success.

Over the past four decades, SAMA has added three satellite museums in Altoona, Johnstown and Ligonier Valley. The permanent collection now numbers north of 4,300, including works by many of the nation's most respected and influential artists. The Museum has received a number of noteworthy awards over the years, highlighted by the Institute of Museum & Library Services' 2002 National Award for Museum Service. Through its multi-faceted education programs, SAMA has provided critical arts education to more than 100,000 children throughout Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fayette, Somerset and Westmoreland counties. To celebrate these successes and its 40th anniversary, the Museum is offering a full schedule of special exhibitions and events throughout the year.

Exhibitions

SAMA-Johnstown begins the year-long celebration with *Spirit of '76: America after Vietnam*. On view through March 18, the exhibition looks back at the art, music, film, politics, advertising, and other aspects of American popular culture at the time of SAMA's founding. Opening in June, SAMA-Loretto will offer *The Finest of Forty*, spotlighting 100 of the most outstanding and significant treasures of SAMA's permanent collection. The Altoona Museum will mount two 40th anniversary exhibitions: *40th Year: 40 Pennsylvania Artists*, opening in May, will highlight 40 local

and regional artists represented in the collection, while a separate exhibition in September will examine fine portraits and busts from the Museum's collection.

Special Events

Fresh off the completion of an archival storage expansion project, the Loretto Museum has a number of special events on its 2016 calendar, beginning with a 40th anniversary edition of *Conversations with the Curator*. On March 17, SAMA Curator Dr. Scott Dimond will introduce patrons to John Sloan's *New York City Life* series, an important collection of etchings that were among the very first works acquired into the SAMA permanent collection.

On April 16, the annual *Night of Distinction* dinner returns to SAMA-Loretto. Margaret and Michael Strueber will be honored with the Service to the Arts Award, while longtime SAMA trustees Karen Azer and Mary Borkow will receive the Volunteerism Award. Two former SAMA awards also will be resurrected: the Award for Artistic Distinction will be presented to Chas Fagan, while the Award for Architectural Excellence will go to Omni Hotels & Resort – Bedford Springs.

The Museum also has embarked on a new membership campaign, attempting to bring in 40 new SAMA members in recognition of its milestone anniversary. The campaign features a new membership brochure which will be available to the public this month. Also in the works is the return of the Collector's Club. The group, popular in the Museum's past, meets regularly to discuss trends in fine art while also raising money for new acquisitions and even purchasing works for the SAMA collection.

Elsewhere, SAMA-Ligonier Valley will celebrate the 40th anniversary with new initiatives. Beginning in January, the Museum will host a monthly social painting program called Studio PM, and later in the year will announce a new live music series that will celebrate the rich musical fabric of Western Pennsylvania by featuring a variety of musical styles. The Altoona Museum will treat all of its 2016 events like birthday parties, complete with cake, balloons and a candy bar.

Fundraisers

Speaking of birthdays, the annual Gala fundraiser at SAMA-Loretto will carry on the birthday theme with the biggest party of them all, "Birthday Bash." Scheduled for July 16, the event will celebrate SAMA's birthday in proper fashion, including live big band music by Flood City Brass Band.

Earlier in the year, SAMA-Ligonier Valley will offer its 15th annual Garden Party on May 21. The fundraiser will feature the highly anticipated "Art of Golf" theme and will include a golf tournament at prestigious Laurel Valley Golf Club on May 19. SAMA's 2016 fundraisers will draw to a close on November 4 as the Altoona Museum

again teams with the American Cancer Society to offer the annual fashion show fundraiser, *Think Pink*.

Biennial

As part of the 40th anniversary celebration, SAMA-Loretto will mount a bigger and better Biennial. Opening October 28, the Biennial is a juried exhibition occurring every two years that highlights the very best in regional artistic talent. For this year's exhibition, SAMA is offering increased cash prizes beginning with a Best of Show prize of \$1,000. Other prizes include \$500 for First Place, \$250 for Second Place, and three Third Place prizes of \$100 each. In addition, the Museum will debut a People's Choice Award of \$300, decided by popular vote. Serving as juror this year is Joyce Robinson, Curator at the Palmer Museum of Art at Penn State University. For registration and additional information, please contact the Loretto Museum at (814) 472-3920.

The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Loretto is located on the campus of Saint Francis University. Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday. The Museum is open to the public free of charge. For more information, call the Museum or visit www.sama-art.org.