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SAMA'S KAMAL YOUSSEF EXHIBITION TO BE LARGEST IN MUSEUM'S HISTORY

Loretto – When the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Loretto unveils its newest exhibition in late June, patrons will be treated to the largest exhibition ever mounted by the Museum. On Friday, June 27, SAMA will offer *Wall-to-Wall Kamal*, a retrospective of Kamal Youssef featuring nearly 250 works spanning more than seventy years. Appropriately titled, *Wall-to-Wall Kamal* will fill the Museum's main gallery, upstairs gallery, stairwells and foyer. Youssef's paintings harken to the beautiful and bold designs of ancient Egyptian art and are steeped in the glorious traditions of Egyptian lore, yet are met with the artist's contemporary style of painting to create a truly inspiring body of work. The exhibition will remain on view through October 11.

Youssef was born in Cairo in 1923. As a youngster, he was greatly influenced by his maternal grandfather, Mohammed Swelem el-Bekri, who taught him to appreciate people of different backgrounds. The lessons he learned in those early years stayed with him, as Youssef's artwork clearly exhibits a sincere love for all people.

His artistic talent was evident early on. Youssef began painting with watercolors and paper given to him by his father. He was later selected for a new, progressive secondary school, at which time his art blossomed. Under the tutelage of artist Ratib Siddik and European instructors, the new school inspired Youssef to seek new heights in his art. Instead of pursuing art at university, however, his father encouraged him to obtain a degree in engineering. It would prove to be a wise decision, as his engineering career would in turn provide him more artistic and economic freedom. After immigrating to the United States in 1956, Youssef worked as an engineer for Swindell-Dressler in Pittsburgh, where he designed highway overpasses and steel mills. He and his family eventually settled in rural Indiana County, where they still live today.

Despite having lived in the United States for more than half a century, Youssef's paintings continue to be influenced by his native Egypt, evinced by the flattened figures, minimalist shapes and burning colors. His figures, primarily women, represent

the creative forces that have shaped, influenced and nurtured his life. Youssef's work has been exhibited throughout the United States, Egypt, France, Italy and Brazil.

The Museum will celebrate *Wall-to-Wall Kamal* with a reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Friday, August 15. Cost is \$20 per person. Reservations are requested and can be made by calling the 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.