



News for Immediate Release

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State Museum of Pennsylvania to Present Folk Arts Exhibition

Harrisburg – The State Museum of Pennsylvania will soon present “Making It Better: Folk Arts in Pennsylvania Today,” a vibrant interactive exhibition featuring objects, photographs, video, music and interactive stations that allow visitors to experience these traditions with all senses. This traveling exhibition opens on Sunday, Nov. 20 and closes on April 29, 2012.

The public is invited to attend a special preview of “Making It Better” as part of Harrisburg’s “3rd in the Burg” celebration on Friday, Nov. 18, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m., with artist Ken Ely as he builds a stone wall to be featured in the show. Old-time gospel and country music will be performed by Karla Armstrong and Friends, playing tunes on a traditional autoharp made by George Orthey, a master autoharp maker featured in the exhibition.

On Nov. 20, the show’s official opening day, exhibition curator Amy Skillman and featured Jewish paper cut artist Susan Leviton will give a tour of the exhibit at 2 p.m. The program is free with museum admission and for State Museum Affiliate Members.

“Making It Better” features more than 30 master artists. The art, coming from every corner of the state, represents a wide array of traditions: from Sudanese dance to Slovenian accordion, from Aztec ritual flutes to Urban Graffiti; from blacksmithing born of the steel industry to Italian bobbin lace learned by girls as insurance against poverty; and from Tibetan sand mandalas to Vietnamese funerary portraits. The exhibition demonstrates that although many traditional arts are rooted in century-old practices, they are meeting the needs of those living in very modern times.

“The featured artists come from many cultures and traditions, and all have different reasons for settling in Pennsylvania. Some were born and raised here. Some are refugees seeking asylum. Some are immigrants who came seeking jobs and opportunities. Yet, all these artists have rich traditions that they love sharing with anyone who is willing to learn,” said curator Amy Skillman.

Yolanda Lorya, creates traditional Latuko bead dance costumes native to Southern Sudan. “In America everyone is so busy,” she said, “but we Latuko from the U.S. and Canada meet every year, and we dance.” She creates custom-made bustles, sashes, pendants, and headpieces for girls and women.

David Castano's figures pay tribute to ordinary workers. The exhibit displays nine miners he carved to represent those who were trapped in the Queecreek coal mine in Somerset County in 2004. He is now often commissioned to create carvings of sons and daughters serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Making It Better" is on loan from the Erie Art Museum and was developed in partnership with several folk arts organizations around the state and with funding from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Pennsylvania Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The State Museum of Pennsylvania, adjacent to the State Capitol in Harrisburg, is one of 25 historic sites and museums administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission as part of the Pennsylvania Trails of History®. The State Museum offers expansive collections interpreting Pennsylvania's fascinating heritage. With exhibits examining the dawn of geologic time, the Native American experience, the colonial and revolutionary era, a pivotal Civil War battleground, and the Commonwealth's vast industrial age, The State Museum demonstrates that Pennsylvania's story is America's story. Museum hours are Wed. through Sat., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sun., noon to 5 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for children and senior citizens.

For more information about the museum, visit www.statemuseumpa.org.

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