

THE Studio Museum IN Harlem

144 West 125th St. New York, NY 10027 ' 212 864-4500 Fax 212 864-4800

DYNAMIC SURVEY OF EMERGING BLACK ARTISTS FEATURES NEW WORK FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Freestyle Introduces a Pioneering Generation of Artists to National Audiences

First Major Exhibition Under New Studio Museum Leadership

March 26, 2001 – New York, NY – Engaging new work by 28 young black artists poised to emerge in the 21st century will be on view at The Studio Museum in Harlem this spring. *Freestyle*, a title inspired by the popular musical form, will bring together an eclectic group of artists who are exploring a range of issues and working in a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, photography, video and digital technology. Organized by Thelma Golden, Studio Museum Deputy Director for Exhibitions and Programs, *Freestyle* will feature 86 works – many of which are site-specific – installed throughout the entire museum. The presentation will be on view from April 28 through June 24, 2001.

Freestyle is sponsored by the Philip Morris Companies.

The exhibition is a reflection of the current creative moment among a new generation of black artists, including Laylah Ali, Rico Gatson, Kojo Griffin, Dave McKenzie, Julie Meheretu and Kori Newkirk. Their work is informed by multiculturalism and influenced by the generation of artists who emerged in the 80s and 90s, such as Ellen Gallagher, Glenn Ligon, Kerry James Marshall, Gary Simmons, Lorna Simpson and Kara Walker. Born primarily after the Civil Rights movement and having assimilated the discourse of 'black art', the artists in *Freestyle* offer a new perspective on identity, culture, and aesthetics. The exhibition will explore how these issues are examined in the artists' work through humor, poetry, passion and irony.

Freestyle caps a period of revitalization for The Studio Museum. It is the first major exhibition to be organized by the Museum under the leadership of new director Lowery Stokes Sims and deputy director Thelma Golden. In addition, the exhibition's opening will coincide with the unveiling of the striking new 125th Street façade, the continuation of the Museum's major renovation and expansion project begun in 1998.

“Since the founding of The Studio Museum more than thirty years ago, the art world has changed - in part because of the pioneering work done by the Museum and other like-minded institutions to present a diverse range of artists,” said Thelma Golden. “With *Freestyle*, The Studio Museum is reaffirming its commitment to presenting new and daring contemporary art.”

“As a long-standing supporter of African-American artists and work, we are proud to partner with The Studio Museum on such an important presentation of today’s exciting young artists,” said Jennifer Goodale, director of corporate contributions, Philip Morris Management Corp. “Philip Morris has been an enthusiastic sponsor of the Museum’s innovative and educational exhibitions and programming for almost thirty years.”

Freestyle will fill the entire museum – the upper and main floor galleries and the newly renovated lobby. Many of the works featured in the exhibition are site-specific and address the distinctive spaces and architecture of the building. A variety of media – from traditional works on paper to sound installations – will be represented, including paintings by Laylah Ali, John Bankston, Deborah Grant, Kojo Griffin, David Huffman, Mark Bradford, Louis Cameron, Jerald Ieans, Trent Doyle Hancock and Senam Okudzeto; drawings by Arnold Kemp and Julie Mehretu; photography by Adler Guerier, Kira Lynn Harris, Rashid Johnson and Vincent Galen Johnson; video installations by Sanford Biggers, Rico Gatson, Dave McKenzie, Cliff Owens and Susan Smith-Pinelo; sound installations by Camille Norment and Nadine Robinson; sculpture by Adia Millett and Eric Wesley; digital work by Tana Hargest; an installation by Jennie C. Jones; and a site-specific wall drawing by Kori Newkirk.

Catalogue

A 72-page illustrated catalogue will be published to accompany the exhibition. It will include color and black and white illustrations, artist biographies and a checklist. An introduction by Thelma Golden, an essay by Hamza Walker, The Renaissance Society Chicago, and entries on each artist by a variety of authors will allow for a multitude of voices to be presented. In the spirit of the exhibition, the catalogue will include authors who represent members of a new generation of thinkers and writers about contemporary art and culture.

About The Studio Museum

In the past thirty years, The Studio Museum has established itself as the leading museum for the art of Black America and the African Diaspora. Opened in 1968 as a studio and exhibition space, the Museum has grown into an active and vital institution, encompassing exhibition galleries, expanded studio and

workshop spaces, a sculpture garden, storage and conservation facilities, an archive and a Museum Store. The educational and public programs of the Museum serve a diverse audience, and the Museum provides the primary training ground for African-American museum professionals and artists. Through presentations of pivotal exhibitions of the work of both established and emerging artists, the Museum continues to be a catalyst for building awareness of the impact of African-American art and culture on American art history and on contemporary American society.

About Philip Morris Companies Inc.

The qualities that guide the successful growth of its businesses – innovation, creativity and diversity – have been the cornerstone of Philip Morris’ giving philosophy for 45 years. Philip Morris Companies – Kraft Foods, Miller Brewing, Philip Morris International and Philip Morris U.S.A. – is recognized worldwide as a preeminent and respected arts sponsor, focusing its support on the visual arts and dance. For more information on Philip Morris’ contributions programs, visit the company’s web site at www.philipmorris.com/philanthropy.

Contact information:

Christine Ferrara/Celina Bustamante
Resnicow Schroeder Associates
cbustamante@resnicowschroeder.com
212/671-5171 (ph)/ 212/595-8354 (fax)

Laurie Guzzinati
Philip Morris Companies Inc.
917/663-2144 (ph)