

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Crosscurrents in the Mainstream, the Zimmerli Art Museum's exhibition contribution to the statewide initiative Transcultural New Jersey, opens to the public on April 4, 2004.

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 3, 2004. 7-9pm

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ – The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum is proud to present the exhibition *Transcultural New Jersey: Crosscurrents in the Mainstream*. *Transcultural New Jersey* is a statewide artistic, cultural, and educational initiative in which over 24 museums and other cultural and historical institutions have joined to document and celebrate the ethnic diversity of the state. Focusing on artists of Hispanic/Latino, African, Asian, and Native American heritage, a series of exhibitions will explore how art by recent immigrants and established ethnic communities embody their former and current homelands, cultures, and their personal interaction within contemporary American society. Commenting on the Zimmerli's involvement in the project, Director Gregory Perry stated, "It is a great pleasure for the Zimmerli Art Museum to act as the co-organizer of the Transcultural Initiative with the Rutgers Office for Intercultural Initiatives. *Transcultural New Jersey* is of particular significance to the Zimmerli because it allows us to highlight many important creative communities in New Jersey while cooperating with a number of significant cultural organizations in the state." *Crosscurrents in the Mainstream* will be on view from April 4 through July 31, 2004 in the Voorhees Special Exhibition Galleries. **A full-color catalogue accompanies the exhibition and documents all shows taking place during the first half of the year-long celebration.**

For the most part, the artists whose work is displayed in *Transcultural New Jersey* have been selected specifically due to the presence in their work of imagery or ideas that reflect their cultural origins. However, first and foremost, individual artists maintain personal artistic integrity by expressing that which is most compelling to them, in whatever form best suits this expression. *Crosscurrents in the Mainstream* is an exhibition that explores, in a sense, a proposition converse to those of most other *Transcultural New Jersey* themes, recognizing a simple but very significant fact. A large proportion of the artists from diverse cultural origins are actively creating art that fits quite nicely within one or another of the myriad stylistic paths of international modernism – a vast flow of diverse manners that, for want of a better word, can be called the "mainstream." One sees, for example, formalist abstract metal sculptures, landscape paintings, expressive figuration, video and conceptual art. Their art often gives no apparent indication of the national or ethnic origins of the artist.

However, while these artists may usually forgo references to their heritage, this is not an inflexible limitation. As individuals who both search within themselves and from their external experience for their inspiration, the inherent existence of their cultural heritage can make its presence known in their art, sometimes directly, sometimes through oblique references. So these artists, while usually creating work that is culturally anonymous, also produce – from time to time, and to varying degrees – art that reflects selected aspects of their heritage. This practice may take many forms: traditional art techniques,

religious symbols, references to political or societal events, reminiscences of national legends or literature. *Crosscurrents in the Mainstream* addresses this important aspect of New Jersey's cultural fabric through the work of eleven artists: Emma Amos, Peter S. Arakawa, Siona Benjamin, Melvin Edwards, Ming Fay, Benedict J. Fernandez, William Grant, Mija Kim, Rafael Montañez Ortiz, Ludvic Saleh, and Kay WalkingStick

The Zimmerli Art Museum is located at 71 Hamilton Street on the College Avenue Campus of Rutgers University in New Brunswick. Hours are Tuesday – Friday, 10 AM to 4:30 PM, and Saturday – Sunday, noon to 5 PM. Admission is \$3.00 for adults and free for museum members, Rutgers University students, faculty and staff (with ID), and children under 18. The museum is open free to the public on the first Sunday of every month. For more information call 732.932.7237, extension 610.

Transcultural New Jersey is supported by



Merrill Lynch, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, JPMorganChase, Johnson & Johnson, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, and the Office of the Executive Vice President of Academic Activities, Rutgers University. The exhibition schedule and additional information are available at www.transculturalNJ.org.