

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City Art Award Recognizes Works that Add Beauty and Meaning to City Streets and Hospital Walls

May 22, 2008 – Mayor John Hieftje will present the Golden Paintbrush Awards on June 2, 2008, at 7 p.m. in the public portion of the Ann Arbor City Council meeting (located at City Hall). All are welcome to attend and honor this year's winners: Karim and Nawal Motawi and U-M Hospital's Interior Design Division for *Tile Quilts*; Elshafei Dafalla Mohamed, the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies, and the School of Art and Design for *Umbororo Crossing*; Y. David Chung and Denali Development Group for *Ten*; and Erica Fink for *The Story of a Million Flowers*. Each year the Commission on Art in Public Places (CAPP) reviews public art projects of note created in the city, and recognizes several outstanding examples with its Golden Paintbrush Award.

"I have observed many patients and visitors, adults and children, viewing and *feeling* the artwork," says Lisa Danielson, Educational Nurse Coordinator in the Acute Adult Rehabilitation Unit at U-M Hospital where two of the *Tile Quilts* designed by Motawi Tileworks are accessible to staff and visitors, but also patients on the unit, most of whom are in wheelchairs. "I cannot tell you how moved I am when I see this interaction happen," Danielson says, "it is a wonderful thing in life when something comes together this beautifully and completely." The quilts were installed by Bill Ransom. Anne Parker, Interior Design manager for the Hospital, was instrumental in coordinating installation. In creating the work, Motawi designers mixed glazed field tile with decorative multi-colored polychrome tile, producing "a series of collages that were not unlike fabric quilts." The quilts have been so popular that the Hospital has commissioned many more than the two originally planned for the high-traffic first floor of the main hospital tower. To date, eight tile quilts have been installed on four floors, and eight more have been designed.

Umbororo Crossing brought animal sculptures inspired by Sudanese drawings to State Street and City Hall in April and May of 2008. "It was an attempt to pay homage to my experience and to the generosity of the people with whom I lived and worked for two years," says artist Elshafei Dafalla Mohamed, who lived among the Umbororo nomads of the Sudan in the late 90s and held informal "drawing workshops" with them. Mohamed dedicates the work to the Umbororo, aiming "to commemorate their ways of life and their nomadic lifestyle, which essentially resists the fixity of space and time." Co-recipients of the Golden Paintbrush for this project are the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies, and the School of Art and Design. Special recognition goes as well to City Hall and the Downtown Development Authority for assistance. The installation of the sculptures in downtown Ann Arbor, facilitated by the direct intervention of Mayor Hieftje, also allowed Mohamed to explore themes of urban versus rural and to make the Umbororo and their material culture "familiar" in a very different context. "Questions arose on the faces of many drivers who were unable to grasp the concept of a parking space occupied by anything other than an automobile," Mohamed said of the sculptures' sojourn on State Street.

With the mosaic *Ten*, installed at 322 East Liberty Street in June 2007, artist Y. David Chung depicted ten symbols of longevity that are common motifs in Korean *Minwha* folk painting and Chosun decorative arts. "These auspicious signs of eternity – turtle, pine, sun, deer, fungus, cranes, water, clouds, mountains, and rocks – were at times arranged in single compositions and at times used together," says Chung. Chung, an Associate Professor in the School of Art and Design and Director of the Center for Korean Studies, has exhibited throughout the country and around the world, in addition to creating or co-creating a number of important public art installations. Mark Demaria of Denali Development Group headquartered in Royal Oak was instrumental in envisioning and commissioning the piece for the Ann Arbor building. Chung was assisted in creating the mosaic – which is made entirely of hand-cut glass – by U-M students, led by Elizabeth Hazle, a recent graduate of the School of Art and Design.

The Story of a Million Flowers by U-M art student Erica Fink is a final winner of the Golden Paintbrush. The project officially began in May 2007 when Fink started to approach neighbors about a possible mural on a nondescript stretch of fence along Huron Parkway. Since her parents live in the neighborhood, Fink had driven by the "canvas" hundreds of times. Actual painting of the mural, which now stretches nearly a quarter mile, began in June. While not all neighbors were pleased, a great many came around as the project progressed. Many love the beauty that Fink's work has brought to the neighborhood. Others admire Fink's tenacity: "What may have started out as a lark for the first week certainly challenged Erica and her team as the project extended through the summer and into the fall, and yet they stuck with it." Fink herself is struck by what the project says about community and by the energy art can bring to an overlooked space: "The overwhelming joyfulness is really captivating for that part of town."

A special award will also go to McKinley and the Ann Arbor District Library for "Giving Art New Life." McKinley donated a sculpture by David Lee Brown to the City, and the piece has since been re-sited at the new Pittsfield Township branch in collaboration with Josie Parker of the Library. A second special award for "Supporting Public Art" goes to Annie Wolock of keystone media, Glenn Thomas of Adair Digital Services, and Genia Service of Genia Design Service, for developing the CAPP website and placing CAPP's community resource guide, *jumpstART!*, online.

Founded in 1998, the Commission on Art in Public Places works to encourage greater awareness of, access to, and engagement with public art in the City of Ann Arbor. In 2007 the commission helped pass a Percent for Art Ordinance to support public art projects in the City. This makes Ann Arbor one of 413 communities nationally with ordinances to fund public art. CAPP will initiate its first public art project funded by Percent for Art funds in 2008.

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Additional photos available on request. For more information, please contact:

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