

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**ISABELLA  
SEWART GARDNER  
MUSEUM**

**12<sup>th</sup> Annual “Community Creations” Exhibition Features Work by Young People  
from Boston’s Fenway neighborhood, Roxbury, Dorchester,  
West Roxbury, Mission Hill, and Jamaica Plain**

*Art inspired by and created through the Gardner Museum’s Community Partnership  
and Teens Behind the Scenes Programs in conjunction with area artists*



**Exhibition on View: June 13-21, 2009 \* FREE with museum admission  
\*Opening Reception—on Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 6-8 pm—FREE for all\***

MAY 20, 2009, BOSTON • Spring is in the air at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum as the museum looks forward to celebrating the fresh perspectives of young local artists in its 12<sup>th</sup> annual *Community Creations* exhibition, on view from June 13-21, 2009. Continuing the legacy of support for emerging young artists and the tradition of community involvement begun by Isabella Gardner herself, the Gardner Museum’s *Community Creations* exhibition presents works of art created by students from neighboring communities, including Boston’s Fenway area, Dorchester, Roxbury, Mission Hill, Jamaica Plain, and West Roxbury.

“Isabella Gardner was a community philanthropist, sponsoring garden and student musical competitions to enrich the lives of the young people living in the areas surrounding her museum,” says **Anne Hawley**, *Norma Jean Calderwood Director* of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. “Today, the Gardner remains committed to supporting and enriching the lives of young people in our community by encouraging creative expression and providing access to art and beauty for all. This exhibition showcases the creative talents of our city’s youth and celebrates the connections they have made with art, each other, and the museum.”

Now in its twelfth year, the *Community Creations* exhibition is the culminating event of an entire year spent looking at, learning about, drawing inspiration from, and creating art at the Gardner Museum through the museum’s *Community Partnership Program*, a unique collaboration with six local community organizations, including the **Alternative School at Little House** (Dorchester), **Dorchester Alternative School** (Dorchester), **Fenway High School** (the Fenway area of Boston), **Hawthorne Youth and Community Center** (Roxbury), **Mother Caroline Academy** (Dorchester), and **Peace Drum Project** (Jamaica Plain), as well as teens from the Gardner’s own *Teens Behind the Scenes* program.

*Community Partnership Program* students, ranging in age from 8 through 18, experience an in-depth, multi-visit approach to learning at the Gardner Museum each year. Students visit and explore the museum’s galleries regularly over the course of the year, learning to look closely at art and develop their own opinions. Toward the end of their tenure at the museum, they are encouraged to draw inspiration from these experiences to create original two- and

three-dimensional works of art for the *Community Creations* exhibition. At the end of the exhibition, each work of art is returned to the community organization for permanent display, serving as a continual reminder of the students' time at the Gardner.

The Gardner Museum's education programs improve critical thinking skills in young learners, as demonstrated in "Thinking Through Art," a three-year nationwide research study funded by the U.S. Department of Education's *Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination* grant program, completed in 2007.

"We've learned through research that helping students to look closely at art makes a major difference in the development of the critical thinking skills they will need to do well in school and throughout their lives," says **Peggy Burchenal**, *Curator of Education and Public Programs*. "In this way, the museum's *Community Partnership* and *Teens Behind the Scenes* programs make an important contribution to the future of young people in our community."

"*Community Creations* connects the Gardner Museum and the surrounding neighborhoods in a meaningful and inspiring way—and has a lasting impact on the students' learning and confidence in many ways," adds **Johnetta Tinker**, *Director of Community Programs*. "The opportunity to showcase their works alongside over thirty centuries of art in a place that they have come to know intimately empowers them to discover and share their own creative expression."

**COLLABORATING ARTISTS** ■ *Community Partnership* students collaborate with Gardner Museum education staff, the two high school Museum Associates (both of whom are alumnae of the *Community Partnership Program*), as well as local artists in creating the art for the exhibition. This year, students from Hawthorne Youth & Community Center are working with artist **Wendy Ellertson** (<http://www.ellertson.com/>) from Roxbury; students from Dorchester Alternative School and the Peace Drum Project are working with Roxbury-based textile artist **Susan Thompson** (<http://www.susanthompson.net/>); and students from Mother Caroline Academy are working with local artist **Margaret Treglia**. The opportunity to collaborate with a professional artist from the community offers added inspiration for the students through their own artistic journeys.

**FENWAY HIGH SCHOOL ELECTIVE PARTNERSHIP – All New!** ■ This spring, the Gardner initiated a new intensive elective program in partnership with Fenway High School as part of the *Community Partnership Program*. Over the course of six weeks, a small group of students will visit the museum two days a week, spending time exploring the galleries and making art of their own, which will be complemented by a weekly art history discussion in the classroom. The inaugural group of students in this program will present artwork as part of the *Community Creations* exhibition in June.

**"TEENS BEHIND THE SCENES" PROGRAM** ■ The Gardner Museum's *Teens Behind the Scenes* Program (TBS) offers a diverse group of highly motivated, energetic and committed teens the rare opportunity to go "behind the scenes" of the museum to experience how conservation, education, security, landscape, and curatorial departments operate. Teens plan and implement innovative programs for community teens through networking with their peers and dynamic community professionals, and have the chance to meet and work with professional artists from all over the world through the museum's *Artist-in-Residence* program. The *Teens Behind the Scenes* group will present new works of art developed through their collaborations as part of this year's *Community Creations* exhibition.

Drawing inspiration from the Gardner Museum's permanent collection as well as the special exhibition, *Journeys East: Isabella Stewart Gardner and Asia* (on view through the end of May), the 2009 *Community Creations* exhibition will showcase a diverse array of artworks including graffiti inspired by words found throughout the museum, tiles featuring symbols of power, prayer flags, screens, and printmaking techniques.

***Community Creations* opens June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009, with a free Friday evening celebration featuring looking activities throughout the museum, refreshments, and entertainment by Jamaica Plain-based group Zili Misik. Members of the community, in addition to friends and family of the student artists, are invited to join the celebration. The students' work remains on view until June 21<sup>st</sup> in the special exhibition gallery.**

**SAVE THE DATE!** • The community fun continues through the summer! Mark your calendars for the Gardner Museum's popular *Neighborhood Nights* programs this summer on Thursday evenings: July 9<sup>th</sup>, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, and August 6<sup>th</sup> from 5-9 pm. These free evening events feature art, music, and fun – and families are welcome!

#### **EDUCATION AT THE GARDNER MUSEUM • Celebrating Creativity & Community**

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's award-winning education department, headed by the National Art Education Association (NAEA)'s 2002 *Art Educator of the Year* **Margaret Burchenal**, strives to provide visiting students from the local community and school partnership program groups with innovative, sustained interactions with the

collection to foster a life-long love and appreciation of great art. In 2007, the Gardner Museum completed an important three-year, Department Of Education (DOE)-funded study into the effects of arts education on the development of critical thinking skills in young children. The study found that elementary school students from Boston public schools who visited the Gardner repeatedly to learn to look at and talk about art showed significant improvements in critical thinking skills crucial for learning. Gains in skills including close observation, interpretation, and problem solving demonstrate that visiting museums is a valuable learning experience for school-age children, and complements the education they receive in school. More information about this study and the importance of arts in education is available online at: <http://www.gardnermuseum.org/education/tta/tta.html>.

**ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM** • 280 The Fenway Boston MA 02115 617.566.1401 [www.gardnermuseum.org](http://www.gardnermuseum.org) • Tue.-Sun., 11 am-5 pm • \$12 adults; \$10 seniors; \$5 students; \$2 off with same-day Museums of Fine Arts admission; FREE members, children under 18, all named "Isabella", and everyone on their birthday • Built in the style of a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Venetian palazzo, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is a magical place, unlike any other museum in the world. With three floors of galleries displaying over 30 centuries of art surrounding a lush indoor courtyard garden, this unique space fires the imagination and offers a one-of-a-kind experience and opportunity for learning and engagement with the arts.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Students *from multiple Boston neighborhoods* who are involved in the *Community Partnership* or *Teens Behind the Scenes* programs are available to talk about their experiences and their art before and during the exhibition opening reception. Interviews are also available with the principal, participating teachers, and students from Fenway High School to discuss their new intensive six-week elective program in collaboration with the Gardner.

Please contact the press office for more information. A photographer will be in attendance at the opening event, and we would be happy to provide those image/captions to you for your consideration.