



BERMUDA NATIONAL GALLERY

For immediate release

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“Living with Art” makes international debut at the BNG

Hamilton, Bermuda, October 1, 2007 — **Living with Art**, one of the most impressive private collections of modern and contemporary African-American art in the United States, will make its international debut at the Bermuda National Gallery on October 8 when the exhibition is officially opened by the Premier of Bermuda, Dr. The Hon. Ewart F. Brown.

The exhibition, which opens to the public on October 9 and continues to January 3, 2008, is drawn entirely from the collection of Alitash Kebede, an Ethiopian-born, Los Angeles collector and features the most important African-American artists of the 20th century.

It includes 74 works by 37 of the most important African-American artists from the modern and contemporary periods such as Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, Norman Lewis, Lois Mailou Jones, Richard Mayhew, and, Betye Saar and her daughters, Alison Saar and Lezley Saar. Stretching from the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s through the 20th century, the collection features a diverse and sweeping range of styles, subjects and media ranging from portraits, landscapes and abstracts to sculptures and mixed media collages.

The exhibition has been organised by Landau Traveling Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California and is sponsored by the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs, HSBC Bank of Bermuda, Bank of Bermuda Foundation and Friends of Living with Art.

Ms Kebede said: “There are a number of reasons why I am so excited about my collection coming to Bermuda. One of many reasons is the fact that even though my art collection has been exhibited in several museums in the US for the last four years, this is the first time it is being shown outside of the US.

“These are works of artists that I have admired and have inspired me and many others. To share them with the people of Bermuda, who remind me so much of my own people of Ethiopia, is truly a pleasure. I am delighted by the kind of enthusiasm I have received about the collection not only from the people at the Bermuda National Gallery but, from the number of people I have met on my very first trip to Bermuda, a couple of months ago. In the past, the public response to

the exhibition whenever it has been shown has been overwhelming. I know that the people of Bermuda will be delighted and inspired by the work of these highly gifted, world-class artists and it is my pleasure to share it with them.”

Ms. Kebede’s interest in art was sparked when, as a young girl, she attended an exhibition of the late Ethiopian modern painter, Skunder Boghossian, at Addis Ababa University. Boghossian, who was trained in Paris, was known for his abstractions based on the symbols and material culture from his native Ethiopia as well as the Black Diaspora. Ms. Kebede, who moved to the US to study in the 1970s, eventually met Boghossian in Washington, DC in 1982, purchased one of his paintings and started a collection that now includes more than 100 works.

BNG director Laura Gorham described the exhibition as “a dream come true” for the museum. She explained: “For many years we have been looking for the right exhibition that would resonate with Bermuda, introducing the full scope of 20th Century Art through the work of key African American artists. With this exhibition, we are able to realise our goal of bringing to Bermuda world-class artwork that will inspire and challenge our artists, students and general public.”

The three-month exhibition is supported by educational programming featuring several art world professionals and artists. Alitash Kebede herself will deliver two public lectures and will also visit local schools while other programming related to the exhibition will feature Halima Taha, art historian and author of *Collecting African American Art*; artist Richard Mayhew; art historian and curator Dr. Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, one of the jurors at the 1998 Bermuda Biennial; and Grace Stanislaus, Executive Director of the Romare Bearden Foundation.

Living with Art will feature in a special Newspapers In Education supplement on the visual arts that will be published by *The Royal Gazette* next week, and in a special TV programme to be aired on VSB later this month.

Ms. 2. In a foreword to the exhibition catalogue, the Premier writes: “I never would have imagined my young Ethiopian patient would have emerged to be one of the greatest collectors of African-American art in the world. I am proud to have known her then; I am proud to know her today.

“This time Ms. Kebede isn't walking into my medical practice, but into our country's national gallery. I expect the presence of her collection at the BNG will be as exciting for dedicated art lovers as it is for people rarely exposed to modern and contemporary art.”

The Premier said he and his wife Wanda encourage every Bermudian to visit *Living with Art*. He said: “This is a rare opportunity to see some spectacular works right in Hamilton. We hope Ms Kebede's collection will draw people who do not typically come to City Hall to experience art. If it accomplishes this goal the *Living with Art* exhibition will be an unqualified success.”

“Living with Art: Modern & Contemporary African American Art from the Collection of Alitash Kebede” will be on display at the Bermuda National Gallery from October 9, 2007 – January 3, 2008 admission is free.

To find out more about Alitash Kebede, her collection and the artists featured in Living with Art, visit <http://www.a-r-t.com/lwa/>

About the Bermuda National Gallery: Opened in 1992 and located in the City Hall & Arts Centre in Hamilton, the Bermuda National Gallery is both the home of Bermuda's national art collection and the centre of the Island's thriving arts scene. It is the Island's leading art museum with a richly diverse exhibition programme of past and present works by local and international artists that reflects Bermuda's varied artistic heritage and multicultural community. The Bermuda National Gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Monday to Saturday. Admission free. **For more details contact Director Laura Gorham on 441-295-9428, director@bng.bm or visit www.bng.bm.**