



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL MUSEUM of *WOMEN in the ARTS*

1250 NEW YORK AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20005-3970
TEL· 202 783 5000
FAX· 202 393 3234
WWW.NMWA.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 16, 2010

Media Contact:
Michelle Cragle, 202-783-7373
mcragle@nmwa.org

National Museum of Women in the Arts to Create Culture Gateway in New York Avenue Sculpture Project

Washington, D.C. — National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) announces plans to create a New York Avenue Sculpture Project along one of downtown’s major boulevards. The new dynamic space will enhance the city’s public art profile featuring changing installations of contemporary works by world-renown women artists. Organized by NMWA, it is a collaboration between the museum, the Downtown DC Business Improvement District (BID), the DC Office of Planning and other agencies.

“Bringing NMWA out into the street of our community has been a dream of the museum and our founder Wilhelmina Cole Holladay for many years. We are grateful to our partners at the Downtown DC BID, the Office of Planning, and others who have shared our vision and excitement for this project that will enhance the reputation of women artists and beautify our city. We are confident that as the first and only major sculpture boulevard in the nation’s capital, the New York Avenue Sculpture Project will bring a new liveliness to our neighborhood and we look forward to seeing many new visitors at the Women’s Museum,” says NMWA Director Susan Fisher Sterling.

Throughout the city, public sculpture is an integral part of the streetscape, defining neighborhoods and connecting points of major streets. The New York Avenue Sculpture Project will improve the visual environment of the downtown following in a tradition begun by Pierre L’Enfant in 1791. The project will be anchored by the Herald Square building and Mount Vernon Square, two important locations in the city’s original design by L’Enfant.

The New York Avenue Sculpture Project also supports several planning and community revitalization initiatives already underway including: the CreativeDC Action Agenda; the Mount Vernon Square District Plan, and the Center City Action Agenda; as well as the redevelopment of the Former Convention Center site at 9th Street and New York Avenue. Additionally, the New York Avenue culture gateway will be one of the newest destinations for the 100,000 visitors to the Walter Washington Convention Center as well as some of DC’s 25 million annual visitors.

“This is an exciting new venture for the District and a wonderful testament to the contribution of women in the arts,” says Mayor Adrian Fenty. “As a public-private partnership, this endeavor will contribute to the revitalization of Mount Vernon Square while providing another avenue for great artists from our nation’s capital and around the world to display their creativity and talent.”

-more-

Joined by partners, supporters, officials and neighbors, NMWA expects to dedicate the first phase of the New York Avenue Sculpture Project in April 2010—which will showcase the refurbishment of the 1200 NW block in front of the museum. Chairs for the Sculpture Project and dedication celebration are NMWA First Vice President Marlene Malek and NMWA Board Member Marcia Carlucci. The museum also plans to announce educational and community events as part of the opening dedication. Construction on the first phase begins this winter and includes the removal of old plant materials, construction of sculpture pads, lighting, and new landscaping. Installation of the sculpture will begin in spring 2010.

The artist whose work was selected to inaugurate this new public art exhibition program is the self-taught French sculptor Niki de Saint Phalle. Her nine to 15-foot high whimsical, visually playful and colorful works celebrate women, children, heroes, cultural diversity and love. The works represent major themes within Saint Phalle's career, including the Nanas, Black Heroes, Animals and Totem. The works were selected in consultation with the Niki Charitable Art Trust and federal and local agencies.

Mrs. Holladay adds, "Washington has been a wonderful place for our growing institution. We feel it is a privilege to be in the nation's capital and it is exciting to be able to enhance its presence with the handsome sculpture garden which we hope will bring pleasure to many."

When the New York Avenue Sculpture Project is completed, no later than 2015, it will have transformed the four major medians of New York Avenue, N.W. from 13th Street to Mount Vernon Square into sculpture islands. Art works will be shown on each of the islands along the boulevard in temporary installations lasting for periods of one to three years.

The project is currently funded through support from NMWA National Advisory Board member Medda Gudelsky, the Downtown DC BID, an anonymous donor, the Philip L. Graham Fund, the Homer and Martha Gudelsky Family Foundation, NMWA members and others. The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is also funding the project through its Transportation Enhancement Program. The Enhancement Program provides grant funding for non-traditional projects that are linked to the District's transportation system.

About the Artist

Self-taught artist Niki de Saint Phalle (French, 1930-2002) is best-known for her playful and colorful sculptures that celebrate women, children, cultural diversity, and love. In the 1960s, she became famous for her sculptures of voluptuous female figures that she called "Nanas." For Saint Phalle, these art works were "heralds of a new matriarchal age." Inspired by the work of Spanish artist and architect Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926), Saint Phalle began making large-scale mosaic sculptures for public display during the 1970s. Although the artist is recently deceased, her reputation as a great public sculptor remains, and many of her works are held in trust by the Niki Charitable Art Foundation. In the U.S., the most recent installation, entitled *Niki in the Garden*, has been presented in Atlanta, Chicago, and St. Louis over three successive summers to widespread acclaim.

About NMWA

National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA), founded in 1981 and opened in 1987, is the only museum solely dedicated to celebrating the achievements of women in the visual, performing and literary arts. The museum's permanent collection features 4,000 works from the 16th century to the present created by more than 800 artists; including Mary Cassatt, Frida Kahlo, Alma Thomas, Louise Bourgeois, Nan Goldin and Chakaia Booker along with special collections of 18th-century silver tableware and botanical prints. NMWA is located at 1250 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C., in a landmark building near the White House. It is open Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday, noon-5 p.m. For information, call 202-783-5000 or visit www.nmwa.org.

About the Downtown DC BID

Vibrant, inviting and smart, Downtown DC is Washington's premiere destination for exploring, creating and sharing ideas and experiences. The Downtown DC Business Improvement District (BID) is a private, non-profit organization that provides capital improvements, resources and research to help diversify the economy and enhance the Downtown experience for all. This special district, where property owners have agreed to tax themselves to fund services, encompasses a 138-block area of approximately 825 properties from Massachusetts Avenue on the north to Constitution Avenue on the south, and from Louisiana Avenue on the east to 16th Street on the west. As a catalyst, facilitator and thought leader, the Downtown BID promotes public/private partnerships to create a remarkable urban environment. For more information, visit www.downtowndc.org.