SIGNIFICANT NEW MAG ACQUISITIONS TO GO ON VIEW JUNE 29
Kiki Smith Woodcuts are Gift of Gallery Council

ROCHESTER, NY, June 22, 2011 — Two recently acquired woodcut prints by groundbreaking American artist Kiki Smith will go on view June 29 at the Memorial Art Gallery. The works, along with 10 other prints from the suite Mortal (2007), are the gift of the Gallery Council.

Self-published and printed in black on Japanese paper, Mortal depicts the final stages of the life of the artist’s mother. With great economy, the prints in the portfolio evoke a pathos similar in feeling to the German Expressionists.

“The Gallery is fortunate to possess such poignant and powerful works of art by one of the premier contemporary American artists,” says director Grant Holcomb.

For the Gallery Council, it’s the latest in a series of gifts of art. Says Council president Mary Sue Jack, “We were particularly impressed by the esthetic qualities of the works, their ability to touch viewers in a fundamental way, and their educational value for visitors including UR students in health care professions.”

About the artist
Born in Nuremberg, Germany in 1954 and raised in New Jersey, Kiki Smith grew up working with her hands, often helping her father, the American minimalist sculptor Tony Smith, assemble models for his sculptures. Early in her career, she exhibited in the landmark Times Square Show of 1980. Her first solo show was at The Kitchen in New York two years later. Since then, Smith has gained international prominence and had major solo exhibitions in countries as far afield as Denmark, Israel, Ireland and Italy.

While she is best known as a sculptor, printmaking is central to Smith’s work. “Prints mimic what we are as humans,” she has said. “We are all the same and yet everyone is different. I also think there’s a spiritual power in repetition, a devotional quality, like saying rosaries.”

In a 2004 review in Art in America of her print retrospective at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, critic Faye Hirsch wrote, “More than any other artist working in print, Smith has brought out in the medium a kind of physicality that is not its most ready association. No matter how surreal the presentation—breasts as moons or faces as stars—the works never entirely shed their material origins, and it is in this materiality that Smith seems to find relief from mortal constraints.”

In 2005–07, a major retrospective of more than 200 of the artist’s works traveled to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and La Colección Jumex, Mexico City. Other recent solo shows have included Kiki Smith: Her Home, Kunsthalle Nuremberg, Germany (2008); Kiki Smith: Her Memory, Fundacio Joan Miro, Barcelona (2009); and Sojourn, Brooklyn Museum (2010).
Smith’s work is in the permanent collections of such institutions as the Brooklyn Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the De Young Museum, San Francisco; the Museum of Modern Art, NY. the Guggenheim Museum and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

In 2005 she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York, where she lives and works. In 2006 the Rhode Island School of Design honored her with the Athena Award for Excellence in Printmaking. The same year, she was one of Time magazine’s “100 People Who Shape Our World;” in the accompanying article, artist Chuck Close called her “one of our greatest artists.”

About the Gallery Council
Founded in 1940, the Gallery Council is an all-volunteer organization that has raised close to $3 million for the Memorial Art Gallery, its collections and its programs. To learn about Council projects, opportunities, gifts of art, and membership visit mag.rochester.edu/gallerycouncil.

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