MEMORIAL ART GALLERY RECEIVES NEA ART WORKS GRANT TO CONSERVE WPA ART

ROCHESTER, NY, May 15, 2012 — The Memorial Art Gallery is one of 788 not-for-profit organizations nationwide recently selected to receive an Art Works grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The Gallery’s $15,000 award will be used to conserve a group of 37 Depression-era mural study drawings by Rochester artist Carl Peters (1897–1980).

The drawings are part of larger group donated to MAG in 2009 by the family of Thomas Miller, who had been a close friend of the artist. They were completed in the 1930s with funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a massive New Deal government arts initiative.

The works to be conserved include composition and figure studies, as well as preparatory drawings, for 11 murals at three Rochester institutions—two at West High School (now Wilson Commencement Academy), eight at Charlotte High School and one at Fairport Library (now Fairport Historical Museum). (Drawings for two murals at Madison High School, now Wilson Foundation Academy, were conserved in 2010 under a Greater Hudson Heritage Network grant.)

Beyond their obvious aesthetic value, the drawings offer insight into the artistic process: They reflect the intense colors and blocky, sculptural figures seen in the finished murals, and in some cases exhibit grid lines, fingerprints and stains that show that they were taken on-site by the artist. They also illuminate the Memorial Art Gallery’s role in the WPA Fine Arts program, which was administered locally by MAG director Gertrude Herdle Moore. Moore, along with curator Isabel Herdle (herself a member of the commission) had a good relationship with Peters, who is today recognized as an important Regionalist painter.

Along with other Rochester WPA projects, the Peters works were the subject of a recent CITY Newspaper story, which quoted MAG curator of American art Jessica Marten and librarian Lu Harper. Read the story

About the grant
The NEA received 1,624 applications requesting more than $78 million in funding under the Art Works category for this round of funding and awarded grants totalling $24.81 million. These grants support “the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts, and the strengthening of communities through the arts.” See a complete listing

MAG on the web
mag.rochester.edu

Press contact:
Patti Giordano, 585-276-8932  pgiordano@mag.rochester.edu
Meg Colombo, 585-276-8934  mcolombo@mag.rochester.edu

###