

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART TO PRESENT SOLO EXHIBITION OF WORK
BY DISTINGUISHED ATLANTA ARTIST MEDFORD JOHNSTON**

“Medford Johnston: Counterpoise”

February 8, 2014 – June 8, 2014

ATLANTA, Jan. 6, 2014 – The High Museum of Art continues its commitment to celebrating the work of Atlanta-based artists with “Medford Johnston: Counterpoise,” a contemporary art exhibition featuring paintings by Atlanta native and art educator Medford Johnston. The exhibition will be on view from Feb. 8 through June 8, 2014.

The show features selections from Johnston’s “Masai Portraits” series (1988) and a related series of paintings inspired by the people and places he experienced during his travels in Tanzania and Kenya following an academic sabbatical in the late 1980s.

Five paintings from this body of work were included in the 41st Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. in 1989. “Counterpoise” presents these works and several others from the series, including “Samburu” (1988) from the High’s permanent collection, which will be shown along with “Masai Portraits” for the first time in Atlanta.

Johnston’s paintings consist of finely balanced compositions whose forms and color combinations are specific to the impressions of the people and places he observed on his travels through Tanzania and Kenya. Paintings such as “Samburu,” “Kikuyu” and “Masai” refer to the people of those specific cultures, while others such as “Aberdare,” “Manyara” and “Thika” refer to places through which he passed. The works comprise variations on a theme inspired by Masai walking staffs, which are used not only for balance while herding cattle but also as protective weapons against the animals who threatened both the herdsmen and their charges.

Although Johnston’s work has been included in several group exhibitions at the High, *Counterpoise* represents Johnston’s first solo exhibition at the Museum. Most recently, two of Johnston’s works were on view as part of the exhibition “Trading Places, Part 1: Selected Works from the Collection of MOCA GA” (September 2011 – February 2012). One of those works, “Basic Masai – II” (1989-90), is included in *Counterpoise*.

“Since joining the High, I’ve enjoyed meeting emerging artists in the city and discovering the work of artists who have made a significant impact upon the art scene in Atlanta,” said Michael Rooks, Wieland Family curator of modern and contemporary art at the High. “Discovering Med’s work was a revelation. His contributions to visual arts in Atlanta have been manifold and have largely flown under the radar – from the seminal exhibitions he organized as an art professor, which raised the level of criticality among a generation of Atlanta artists and served as

an introduction for our city to artists like Joel Shapiro, Richard Tuttle, Lynda Benglis and others, to his own work, which is all together formally sophisticated and a visual indulgence.”

About Medford Johnston

Medford Johnston was born in Atlanta, Ga., in 1941 and was raised in Decatur, Ga. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Georgia State University in 1965 and his Master of Fine Arts degree from Florida State University in 1967. Johnston began an influential career as an art professor in Atlanta upon the completion of his postgraduate work in 1967, while at the same time maintaining an active studio practice. During his career as professor of art, Johnston generated several bodies of influential work and mentored successive generations of emerging artists in Atlanta. In addition to the High Museum of Art, Johnston’s works are included in the collections of such institutions as The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia (MOCA GA); the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the New Orleans Museum of Art; and the Mint Museum of Art, among others.

High Museum of Art

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern U.S. With more than 13,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. This year, the High celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Stent Family Wing, designed by architect Richard Meier. For more information about the High, visit high.org.

The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is ranked among the top four arts centers in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines four visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Young Audiences. To learn more about the Woodruff Arts Center, please visit www.woodruffcenter.org.

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