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**HIGH TO PRESENT MAJOR EXHIBITION OF WILDLIFE  
SCULPTURES BY ARTIST GRAINGER MCKOY**

*“The Sculpture of Grainger McKoy”  
September 25, 2011–January 8, 2012*

**ATLANTA, July 28, 2011** —The High Museum of Art has organized and will premiere “The Sculpture of Grainger McKoy,” a major exhibition dedicated to artist Grainger McKoy’s sculptures of birds. The exhibition will feature 34 small- to large-scale sculptures and several related models and color sketches produced over the course of his career, which spans from the early 1970s until the present. The installation will also explore McKoy’s artistic process, showcasing a selection of mixed-media works in a variety of stages from raw sketches to finished sculptures, as well as graphics and a film of the artist at work in his studio. “The Sculpture of Grainger McKoy” will be on view exclusively at the High from September 25, 2011, through January 8, 2012.



“For nearly four decades Grainger has distinguished himself in the field of wildlife art, carving works of remarkable realism,” stated Michael E. Shapiro, the High’s Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., Director. “His sculpture is finely rendered and artistically designed, challenging popular conceptions of wildlife art. These exquisitely life-like sculptures represent true innovation in the field of bird sculpture.”

Unlike many sculptors of wildlife art, McKoy hand carves individual feathers and inserts them into place—a technique he introduced more than four decades ago. His complex compositions—hallmarks of his work—appear to defy gravity as groupings of birds lift into flight. Like others before him, such as the artist/naturalist John James Audubon (1785–1851), McKoy’s sculptures focus on the dynamics of avian behavior as inspiration—birds feeding, flocking, fleeing danger or fighting. McKoy’s highly realistic representations of birds are made of basic materials such as wood, metal, and paint. In his earliest work McKoy also includes reference to the environment—grasses, mud, sand—to further the naturalistic illusion.

Experimentation has always been central to McKoy’s approach. In early trials with birds in motion, he drew upon the drama of the natural cycle of life, focusing on struggles such as two hawks battling a copperhead snake or clapper rails fighting for a crab. His later works streamline context and setting, and often focus on specific elements such as a single feather or wing instead of an entire bird. McKoy continues to investigate new methods and concepts. His use of metal casting introduced the possibility of significantly adjusting the scale of a sculpture without losing the details so important to his work. Individual details themselves, such as a wing, a talon, a feather, have become finished sculptures. McKoy has made a single wing, as in his series of “Recovery Stroke” sculptures, as expressive and symbolically evocative as a grouping of birds in battle over their prey.

## **Grainger McKoy**

An observer of nature and a hunter from an early age, Grainger McKoy received a gift of an antique duck decoy from his grandmother one Christmas. From this he was inspired to sculpt his first bird, a shorebird carved of cypress from the corner of his family's log cabin in rural South Carolina. McKoy studied architecture for a few years in college but he never abandoned his first love: carving. His skills were recognized by the innovative bird carver Gilbert Maggioni of Beaufort, South Carolina, who convinced McKoy that he might try to make a living from carving. Upon graduating from Clemson University in 1970 with a degree in zoology, McKoy moved to Beaufort with his wife Floride to pursue his passion under the tutelage of Maggioni. Unlike most decoy carvers, however, McKoy and Maggioni strove for extreme realism. McKoy also used his knowledge of architecture to create complex, gravity-defying structural compositions, the likes of which had never before been seen in wildlife sculpture.

## **Exhibition Organization and Support**

"The Sculpture of Grainger McKoy" will be on view at the High Museum of Art from September 25, 2011, to January 8, 2012, and is curated by Stephanie Heydt, the High's Margaret and Terry Stent Curator of American Art. Support for this exhibition is provided by The Fraser-Parker Foundation, Sarah and Jim Kennedy and Margaret and Terry Stent. Promotional Partner: "Garden & Gun." "The Sculpture of Grainger McKoy" is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta.

## **High Museum of Art**

The High Museum of Art, founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association, is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 12,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-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 and is distinguished as the only major museum in North America to have a curatorial department specifically devoted to the field of folk and self-taught art. The High's media arts department produces acclaimed annual film series and festivals of foreign, independent and classic cinema. In November 2005 the High opened three new buildings designed by architect Renzo Piano that more than doubled the Museum's size, creating a vibrant "village for the arts" at the Woodruff Arts Center in midtown Atlanta. For more information about the High, please visit [www.High.org](http://www.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](http://www.woodruffcenter.org).

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## **DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

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**Top Image:** *American Kestrel*, 1998. Basswood, bronze and oil paint, 18 inches high. Collection of Christy F. Taucher.