

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

Press Office

TEL 404-733-4437

FAX 404-733-4529

prinfo@woodruffcenter.org

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**PHOTOGRAPHER SHEILA PREE BRIGHT'S YOUNG AMERICANS
TO PREMIERE AT HIGH MUSEUM OF ART**

Election Year Exhibition Examines National Identities of American Youth

May 3 – August 10, 2008

ATLANTA, February 20, 2008 – “Young Americans,” a dynamic new series of photographs by Atlanta-based photographer Sheila Pree Bright, will debut at the High Museum of Art in May 2008. The exhibition explores the identities of U.S. citizens and immigrants pursuing citizenship by presenting portraits of Americans aged 18 to 25, each posing with an American flag.

The exhibition will consist of 28 large-format chromogenic prints, several accompanied by statements from the subjects revealing their opinions and attitudes about American culture and society. On view in Atlanta through August 10, 2008, “Young Americans” will travel to The Amistad Center for Art and Culture, an affiliate institution housed within the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Conn. Additional venues yet to be announced will follow.



“The High Museum is proud to debut this vital new work,” said Michael E. Shapiro, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr. Director at the High Museum of Art. “Sheila Pree Bright’s ‘Young Americans’ brings an exciting and timely dialogue about American identity to the High in this election year. The exhibition offers a fresh, contemporary perspective and an insightful look at the attitudes and beliefs of young adults.”

Pree Bright began working on the “Young Americans” series in the fall of 2006, and her swift development of the project led to her selection as the inaugural recipient of an artist-in-residency at the Amistad Center for Art and Culture. Her subjects are photographed with the American flag in poses reflecting elements of their identities and feelings about their country. Pree Bright collaborates with her subjects by inviting them to choose their own clothing, poses, and interactions with the flag. She has said of the work, “Young people born between 1982 and 2000 constitute the largest generation since the baby boomers, but they are often portrayed negatively in our society. I wanted to give them a platform to speak for themselves—to show and describe how they feel about this country. I also wanted to include young people from diverse backgrounds and socio-economic groups.”

“Sheila is a tremendously talented artist, independent and courageous of voice,” remarks Julian Cox, Curator of Photography at the High and organizing curator for this exhibition. “While relatively simple in conception, the series is challenging and thought-provoking in equal measure.”

Sheila Pree Bright

A 2002 National Graduate Seminar Fellow at the Photography Institute at Columbia University, N.Y., Pree Bright earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in photography from Georgia State University in 2003. Her photographs are included in public and private collections across the United States. In 2006 she was awarded the prestigious Santa Fe Prize. Presented annually by the Santa Fe Center for Photography, this prize recognizes young artists working in photography who show special promise. Currently a studio artist at The Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, she was

awarded the En Foco New Works Photography Award (1999) and the National Bronica Award (2001). Pree Bright's work prior to "Young Americans" highlights issues related to ethnic identity and gender and includes the series "Suburbia," which focuses on home environments of African Americans residing in the suburbs.

Exhibition Organization and Support

The production costs for the "Young Americans" project and exhibition have been generously underwritten by the AETNA Foundation. The exhibition is organized by Julian Cox, Curator of Photography at the High Museum of Art, in partnership with the Amistad Center for Art & Culture at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut. The exhibition will be presented at the Wadsworth Athenaeum this fall and will travel to additional venues to be announced.

AETNA

The Aetna Foundation is the independent charitable and philanthropic arm of Aetna Inc. Founded in 1972, the Foundation helps build healthy communities by promoting volunteerism, forming partnerships and funding initiatives that improve the quality of life where our employees and customers live and work. Since 1980, Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have contributed nearly \$ 335 million in grants, sponsorships and social investments. *For more information, please visit www.aetna.com/foundation.*

The Amistad Center for Art & Culture

The Amistad Center for Art & Culture owns one of the country's finest art and humanities collections devoted to the African American experience. Its holdings include rare books, manuscripts, artifacts and fine art and photography relating to the history of African Americans. A particular strength of the collection is its more than 1,900 19th- and 20th-century photographs that range from vivid images of slave life and the Reconstruction era of the 1860s through the turn of the century, to 1940s and 1950s news photos of the civil rights movement, performers and political figures, to mid-to-late- 20th-century work with themes of social, political and historical references from our own time. *For more information, please visit www.amistadartandculture.org.*

Photography at the High

The High's photography collection includes more than 3,900 prints, with notable examples of every photographic genre and process as well as many of the acknowledged masters in the field, including Julia Margaret Cameron, Carleton Watkins, George N. Barnard, Harry Callahan, Walker Evans and Richard Misrach. American photographs made between 1945 and 1980 are a particular strength of the collection. Additionally, large-scale prints by leading contemporary artists such as Sally Mann, Thomas Struth, Taryn Simon and Jeff Wall also feature prominently in the collection.

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 11,000 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 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 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.*

The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is the largest arts center in the Southeast as well as one of the four largest in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines five 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, Young Audiences and the 14th Street Playhouse.

DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Media contacts:

Cassandra Champion Streich Senior Manager of Public Relations, High Museum of Art
Tel: 404-733-4436 | E-mail: cassandra.streich@woodruffcenter.org

Jennifer Federovitch Maley Public Relations Coordinator, High Museum of Art
Tel: 404-733-4585 | E-mail: jennifer.maley@woodruffcenter.org

Media outside the Southeastern United States please contact:

Ilana Simon Resnicow Schroeder Associates
Tel: 212-671-5176 | E-mail: isimon@resnicowschroeder.com