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Press Release

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Clay Center gallery to feature two captivating West Virginia-related exhibits

(Charleston, W.Va.) 4/26/10 – Witness the impact the state of West Virginia and its associated lifestyles has had in the art world when two engaging exhibits come to Charleston. *67th Allied Artists of West Virginia Juried Exhibition* and *My Body Will Blacken: Coal, Industry, and the Miner in American Art* will open in the Clay Center’s gallery on May 1.

More than 70 years ago, artists from West Virginia came together with an initial purpose to better the aesthetic values in their communities. Today, the Allied Artists of West Virginia not only bring art to their local areas but have also made it their mission to sponsor and award financial assistance to members and young artists throughout the state through their Biennial Juried Exhibition.

This exhibit is juried by Elizabeth Bennett Hupp, assistant curator of the Columbus Museum of Art and Robert Bridges, assistant professor of art at West Virginia University and curator of the WVU Art Collection. Selected from 395 entries submitted by 215 artists, *67th Allied Artists of West Virginia Juried Exhibition* will include a variety of work in all media by artists residing in West Virginia.

Also curated by Robert Bridges, *My Body Will Blacken: Coal, Industry, and the Miner in American Art* presents images of the struggles endured, as well as the heroic nature of miners and their families and the influence the mining profession had on American industry and life during the first half of the 20th century. The artwork, which is dated from 1917 to 1951, focuses on both the industrial landscapes as well as the workers who labored within those environments.

Bridges writes, “Today, the American public most likely only sees images of miners when they were associated with disasters on the evening news. This exhibition offers a broader perspective and reflects the excitement of that changing American landscape back in the early years of the industry. Mining life is presented with all of its hardships and troubles as well as the hope for and promise of better times to come.”

My Body Will Blacken is sponsored by International Coal Group, Inc. The exhibit is in memory of the miners lost of Upper Big Branch-South mine.

Both exhibitions will be on display through June 27. Clay Center gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. For more information, visit www.theclaycenter.org, or call 304-561-3570.

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