

IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Contact: Catherine Blinder
Media Relations, Hartford Public Library
860-695-6342
cblinder@hplct.org

Brenda Miller
Manager, Hartford History Center
860-695-6347
bmiller@hplct.org

Coming to Main Street Hartford

...AGE

April 8, 2009.....*Age*, a dynamic public art collaboration, will be on display this summer from May 14 to August 28, 2009 along the walkway between the Hartford Public Library and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art on Main Street in Hartford. Six banners exhibiting the perspectives and talents of generations of artists, poets and members of the community will be on display. An opening reception will be held Thursday, May 14 at the Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library (500 Main Street) at 5:00 p.m., following a tour of the banners beginning at 4:00 p.m. in front of the Wadsworth Atheneum.(600 Main Street) The event is free and open to the public.

Created under the banner of the national *Age in America* project, the exhibition represents a conversation between generations and showcases the unique contributions of participating organizations working together with the theme of age and aging in our region.

Age in America is a national demonstration project organized by Libraries for the Future with support from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. The project is designed to demonstrate the potential for museums and libraries, working together both locally and nationally, to strengthen public understanding of aging within a historical and cultural context. Hartford is one of three sites in the nation selected to participate in this project. The other sites are Norfolk, VA and Stony Brook, NY.

The project is a collaboration between the Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library and The Amistad Center for Art & Culture at the Wadsworth Atheneum in partnership with the Hill-Stead Museum Sunken Garden Poetry & Music Festival, the Hartford Art School at the University of Hartford, and *Hog River Journal*.

A cross-cultural project, ...*Age* began with intergenerational interpretations of selected historical objects. Six artifacts from the Hartford History Center and The Amistad Center collections are at the heart of the exhibition: a 1971 *Hartford Times* photograph; the front page of *The Hartford Courant* dated July 21, 1969; the 1922 edition of *Grimm's Fairy Stories*; shackles; a lithograph of a slave ship; and the painting "I Am A Man" by Charly Palmer.

Twelve participants, representing a range of ages and diverse backgrounds, were paired so that each pair was comprised of a teen participant and an older adult. The teen participants selected the object he or she wanted to respond to with the adult accepting the teen's choice. Their narratives, informed by their differing ages and experiences, offered, at times, drastically different interpretations of the same object. Participants were also asked to provide a corresponding ...*age* word that captured their reflections; words chosen included *bondage*, *message* and *courage*. Those involved in this initial stage were members of The Amistad Center's Teen Advisory Group (TAG) and adult residents of the Greater Hartford community with Susan Campbell, columnist for the *Hartford Courant*, acting as facilitator. (Full list attached.)

Responses were videotaped and reproduced images of the artifacts as well as the taped interviews were given to participating poets with The Hill-Stead Museum Sunken Garden Poetry & Music Festival. Poets were Ernie Blue, John Harrity, Rennie McQuilkin, Pit Pinegar, Bessy Reyna, Elizabeth Thomas - each poet creating poems from a single narrative and its corresponding image.

The poems, images, and videotaped responses were then sent to graphic art students at Hartford Art School, who were charged with creating large-scale banners. The students, Hali Miller and Sharneil A. Paynter under the guidance of Associate Professor John Nordyke, were given the creative freedom to artistically interpret their personal responses to the materials.

This vibrant process created ...*Age*.

Placement of banners along the Alfred E. Burr Memorial portion of the walkway is courtesy of the Ella Burr McManus Trust. Banners were printed and produced through the generous support of Nutmeg Exhibit Company in Windsor.

The related exhibition of art, artifacts, poetry and primary narratives will be on view in Hartford Public Library's Hartford History Center at 500 Main Street May 14 – August 28, 2009. Hartford History Center is open Tuesday through Saturday, 1 – 5 p.m., and by appointment. Parking is available on the Arch Street parking deck adjacent to the library. The exhibition is free and open to the public. For more information visit online at www.hplct.org/hhc or call The Amistad Center's infoline at 860-838-4133

Primary Narrative Participants

Teen Advisory Group (TAG) at The Amistad Center for Art & Culture

Kristal Carter, Vivian Gay, Brittany Golding, Maya Hawkins-Nelson, Chanel Ross, and Rayshawn Robinson.

Community Members

Facilitator: Susan Campbell

George Scott, Lee Mixashawn Rozie, Alyce T. Rawlins, Joseph R. Gianni, Luis Cotto, and Francesca Reale.

Collaborators

The February 2008 Age in America partnership between Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library and The Amistad Center for Art & Culture at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art has evolved into a dynamic relationship allowing for creative brainstorming and measurable results. To include the Hartford Art School, the Hill-Stead Museum and *Hog River Journal* as fellow collaborators on this project further enhances its scope, providing a multitude of creative resources from which to interpret age and aging as a function of time, place and culture. Together we offer greater opportunities for community involvement, outreach and dialogue.

The Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library is home to the Hartford Collection, a non-circulating, multi-media collection comprised of more than 50,000 books, trade publications, directories, postcards, and photographs that convey community life in Hartford spanning more than 250 years.

The Amistad Center for Art & Culture was founded in 1987 and owns a vital collection of 7,000 items including art, artifacts, and popular culture objects that document the experience, expressions and history of the people of African American heritage.

Hill-Stead Museum is a National Historic Landmark museum showcasing French Impressionist art and host to the nationally recognized Sunken Garden Poetry Festival. Since 1992, audiences have enjoyed verse and music among the fragrant blooms of Hill-Stead's Sunken Garden. This performance series has featured the likes of Billy Collins, Yusef Komunyakaa, Maxine Kumin and Grace Paley. Festivities include a *plein air café* and bookstore and meet-the-poet opportunities.

The Hartford Art School at University of Hartford has a rich history beginning in 1877 with its founding by a virtual who's who of late 19th century Hartford women. These visionary individuals included the abolitionist writer, Harriet Beecher Stowe; the wife of Mark Twain, Olivia Clemens; the president of Colt Firearms Manufacture Company, Elizabeth Colt; the wife of the owner of the *Hartford Courant*, Susan Warner; and Mary

Bushnell Cheney of Cheney Silk Mills. We are delighted to be joined by what is today considered one of the most highly regarded art schools in the country.

Hog River Journal is a statewide magazine exploring Connecticut's history "one good story after another." Its editorial team has enthusiastically picked up the theme of age and aging and will direct its Summer 2009 issue to exploring life stages within an historical context. The ...*Age* Main Street exhibition will also be showcased in its popular "Destinations" column.