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FEBRUARY 2, 2016

‘Heart to Heart’ Exhibit Opens February 13 at Museum of Agriculture Gallery
TIFFON – With Valentine’s Day fast approaching, hearts are everywhere this time of year. On Feb. 13, the Gallery of the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College will open a unique exhibit where hearts are the featured performers.

The Gallery is partnering with the ABAC School of Liberal Arts, School of Nursing and Health Sciences, the Tift Regional Heart and Vascular Center, ABAC alumnus C.L. Morehead, Jr., and the University of Georgia Museum of Art for an event which will educate the community about heart disease while showcasing an exhibit of art inspired by the miracle of medicine.

The “Heart to Heart” exhibit and community outreach event will open during Heart Health month on Feb. 13 with a 2 p.m. reception at the Museum Gallery. The reception is open to the public at no charge. ABAC nursing students will be on hand to provide free screenings including blood pressure, blood sugar checks, and body mass index. They will also offer practical advice on improving heart health through diet and exercise.

The “Heart to Heart” exhibit will feature seven of Georgia Master Lamar Dodd’s Heart Series, six of which belong to Morehead, a Gallery Patron and a 1948 ABAC alumnus. Morehead is a renowned collector with over 800 of Dodd’s works. Abril Andrade Griffith, a pop-surrealist artist from Ohio who has an extensive Heart Series of her own, will be spotlighted alongside Dodd’s work.

As a part of the opening for the exhibit, Dr. William Eiland, Director of the Georgia Museum of Art, will speak on Dodd’s Heart Series at 2:30 p.m. Immediately following the talk,
the gallery will open for tours. An interactive corner inside the Gallery will allow the exhibit’s youngest visitors to get their hands on a heart-related activity.

Dodd spent eight years of his life focused on his Heart Series, the most intimate work of his artistic career. These paintings were born of personal crisis when Dodd’s first wife, Mary, was hospitalized in 1977 for a serious heart condition which required surgery. He began to study all aspects of his wife’s illness and her surgeries and treatment under the mentorship of her physician, Dr. Joe Craver of Emory University Hospital.

Craver encouraged Dodd to participate directly. With a sketch pad in hand, Dodd was given access to surgeons in action and scrubbed in for an up close view of a heart surgery in progress. This series records Dodd’s deeply personal response to the emotional process of seeing his wife through her illness and treatment.

Mary Dodd passed away in 1979. The dramatic experience of going through his wife’s illness, in his own words, made him “paint furiously.” A never-before shown portrait of Mary Dodd painted by Dodd has been pulled out of a collector’s vault and will be on display along with the Heart Series.

Griffith also has a close connection with hearts since she spent many of her formative years in hospitals as the daughter of a nurse and a surgeon. Watching surgery on TV was her favorite pastime, and she drew inspiration from her large collection of vintage anatomy heart posters and her mother’s anatomy books. The heart has always been Griffith’s favorite organ to draw, and anatomical designs have always been a staple of her work. Well known all over the world, her intense pop surrealism work can be found internationally in major retail stores, galleries, and private art collections.
The third component of the exhibit is medically-themed student work created from a series of lectures presented by Museum Curator and Assistant Director Polly Huff to several art classes on the ABAC campus. Students learned about Dodd and his work and focused on the techniques and intent behind his Heart Series. A juried competition of works inspired by the students’ own health stories was open to all of ABAC’s painting, drawing, and 2-D design students, and the selected pieces are a part of the “Heart to Heart” exhibit, including the works of Jane Eaton Gray, a well-known local artist who depicted her fight with breast cancer in a series of impressionist work. Framing for the student work was provided by another exhibit partner, Tifton’s Classic Art & Frame Shop.

Additional Heart To Heart events will be held throughout the exhibit’s stay in the Gallery, which ends April 4. Upcoming events include the Tift Regional Outreach and Development Center’s Lunch and Learn lecture with Tifton cardiologist Paul Murray on February 19 and a heart-healthy cooking demonstration featuring a local physician in March. For the remainder of the exhibit, the Gallery will be made available to gatherings of medical professionals from across the state.

The exhibit will be included with the Museum daily admission ticket. For more information on this exhibit, interested persons can contact Huff at (229) 391-5222 or via e-mail at phuff@abac.edu.

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