



REGINALD F. LEWIS MUSEUM
of Maryland African American
History & Culture

MEDIA RELEASE

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***CANVASING THE MOVEMENT:* THE LEWIS' ARTS WALL CAPTURES IMAGES OF CIVIL RIGHTS, PAST AND PRESENT**

September 8, 2009 - Baltimore, MD– The Reginald F. Lewis Museum (The Lewis) is excited to present its latest Arts Wall exhibition *Canvassing the Movement*, in conjunction with *381 Days: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Story*. This exhibition brings together four African American artists who captured the walking, marching and boycotting that carried the Civil Rights Movement forward. Featured artists are **Charles Alston, Alma Woodsey Thomas, Norman Lewis, and Charly Palmer**. This exhibition is on view until January 31, 2010.

Featured Artists

Charles Alston was among many artists in the 1950s and 1960s who were interpreting events of the Civil Rights Movement on canvas. Alston's painting, *Walking*, is a tribute to the massive energies of Montgomery, Alabama residents who boycotted a segregated bus system for 381 days, beginning on December 5, 1955. Alston, a pioneer of African American modernism, used a colorfully expressive palette and cubist figures to portray the strength of African American family and community.

Walking is on loan from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), in Washington, D.C. The painting is the first piece to be loaned by NMAAHC to a museum outside of the Smithsonian. Dr. Michelle Joan Wilkinson, Director of Collections and Exhibitions, remarks, "I am delighted to bring Charles Alston's *Walking* to the museum. One of our museum's mottos has been "Take the Journey." Alston's painting is a powerful reminder that a leg of that journey began in Montgomery, Alabama —and grew into a national movement for equal rights."

Also on view is *Alabama II*, a haunting, blood-red painting by abstract expressionist Norman Lewis. Lewis created abstract expressionist paintings alluding to the rally violence of the Ku

Klux Klan as well as to the unity of African Americans protesting for equal treatment. Alma Woodsey Thomas, a painter identified with the Washington Color School, drew on a gestural technique to present the force of bodies in her *Sketch for March on Washington*, which documents the historic 1963 event.

The events of the Civil Rights Movement—from the Montgomery Bus Boycott, to the protests in Birmingham, to the sanitation worker's strike in Memphis—inspired many African American artists, from the 1950s to the present. Contemporary artist, Charly Palmer, returns to those episodes of unrest in his mixed media paintings. Palmer traces the stony road African Americans have trod from Montgomery, Alabama in 1955 to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in 2009, with the inauguration of President Barack Obama.

While the some of artists in *Canvassing the Movement* are best known for working abstractly, this exhibition calls attention to how their works reflected the stories and emotions of the Civil Rights Movement.

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The Reginald F. Lewis Museum is Baltimore's premier facility highlighting the history and accomplishments of African Americans with a special focus on Maryland's African American community. A Smithsonian Affiliate, the museum is the East Coast's largest African American museum occupying an 82,000 square-foot facility with ample permanent and special exhibition space, interactive learning environments, auditorium, resource center, oral history recording studio, museum shop, café, classrooms, meeting rooms, outside terrace and reception areas. The museum is located near Baltimore's Inner Harbor at the corner of Pratt and President Streets. For more information, please call 443-263-1800 or visit the museum's website at www.AfricanAmericanCulture.org.