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WORKS FROM CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS REBECCA CAMPBELL AND ANGELA ELLSWORTH ON VIEW AT PHOENIX ART MUSEUM

Seeing is Believing: Rebecca Campbell and Angela Ellsworth Opens September 3

PHOENIX (August 22, 2011) – Seeing is Believing: Rebecca Campbell and Angela Ellsworth, a contemporary art exhibition opening on September 3, 2011, at Phoenix Art Museum, explores the work of two artists who deal with the edge between the lived experience and memory. The exhibition on view through January 22, 2012 includes painting, sculpture, installation and performance.

For both Rebecca Campbell and Angela Ellsworth, the past is not defined as an inert entity or as distant nostalgia but rather as a living phenomenon that morphs along side our day-to-day experiences and can spring without warning into our contemporary lives. This ambiguous sense of time and space leads Campbell and Ellsworth to create images and objects that are hypersensitive, dreamlike and even surreal.

"Rebecca and Angela make work about memory and experience. However, both go beyond the level of autobiography. They use personal content as a means to speak to the viewer and evoke the universal disconnect between reality and nostalgia: the world as it is now, as it actually was, as we remember it and as we would liked it to have been," commented Dr. Sara Cochran, curator of Modern and Contemporary art, Phoenix Art Museum.

The exhibition also reveals two separate childhoods connected by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Campbell and Ellsworth both grew up in Utah within practicing Mormon families. Although, no longer a part of the church those formative experiences of their early lives have deeply affected their mature work as artists. Editor's Note: Neither Campbell or Ellsworth have any previous or current association with the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS).

Campbell's lush paintings speak to a utopian vision of the world that is shaped – in both good and bad ways – by human nature and its imperfections. Perspectives are constantly shifting. Precisely detailed figures cohabit with exquisite passages of abstract paintings that fuse colors and flatten any sense of volume. The tension between opposites – especially between beauty and unease as well as innocence and knowing – is constant. Her sculpture *Do You Really Want to Hurt Me?* is composed of a tree wrapped in black velvet, standing in a base of salt and with tiny, windex-filled glass birds sitting on its branches. Campbell explained that the genesis of the object was the sight of a group of burned trees standing in bright snow. Their slender black trunks reminded her of John Singer Sargent's scandalous 1884 painting *Portrait of Madame X*.

Seeing is Believing – add one

Recent works by Ellsworth explore the historical record of polygamy within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and her own family history in order to re-imagine the social and emotional dynamic among women within that community. Ellsworth's great-great-grandfather was Lorenzo Snow — a Mormon prophet, the fifth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and husband to nine wives. Ellsworth is an acknowledged lesbian living in a committed, long-term relationship with author Tania Katan. She is interested in the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as well as the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' continuing uncomfortable relationship with the larger culture. Ellsworth explores nonheteronormative relationships and issues around alternative lifestyles.

Another central concern for both artists is their position as women artists working with themes and art-making practices that have sometimes been discounted as feminine and therefore less important. The opulent beauty of their work can be misleading. The work is full of seductive turns that draw in the viewer only to surprise them and force them to think about issues they have taken for granted or from which they have shied away.

"The works in this exhibition are thoughtful, surprising, ambiguous and compelling. We see two artists reflecting on their past and contemplating their future as they reach out to their viewers. Their work provokes us to think about the ways in which we have created our own pasts and how this affects our possible futures. It is a deeply moving and personal exhibition," said Cochran.

Seeing is Believing: Rebecca Campbell and Angela Ellsworth is organized by Phoenix Art Museum and is presented in the Marshall and Hendler Galleries in the Katz Wing for Contemporary Art from September 3, 2011 through January 22, 2012.

Admission to the exhibition is included in general museum admission, which is \$10 for adults, \$8 for senior citizens (65+), \$8 for full-time college students with ID, \$4 for children ages 6-17 and free for children under 6 and for museum members.

Phoenix Art Museum is located in downtown Phoenix at the corner of Central and McDowell Road. Museum Hours are Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., Thursday thru Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, Noon – 5:00 p.m. The museum will be closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and major holidays. Admission is free on Wednesdays from 3:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. and for everyone on First Fridays, 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

About the artists

Rebecca Campbell (b. 1971) is known for her startling figurative paintings of children and individuals but her 2009 solo show *Poltergeist* at LA Louver Gallery included a number of large scale installations that directly drew on her childhood. She received her BFA in 1994 from the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon, and her MFA in painting from UCLA in 2001. She lives and works in Los Angeles.

Angela Ellsworth (b. 1964) is an interdisciplinary artist who creates compelling objects and performances. The 2010 Biennale of Sydney included an installation - *Seer Bonnets: A Continuing Offense* – nine bonnets pierced through with pearl-tipped corsage pins and representing the nine wives of her great-grandfather, who was the fifth prophet of the Mormon Church. She lives and works in Phoenix.

Seeing is Believing – add two

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum is the Southwest's premier destination for world-class visual arts. Popular international exhibitions are shown along side the Museum's outstanding collection of more than 18,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. A vibrant destination for over fifty years, Phoenix Art Museum presents festivals, live performances, independent art films and educational programs that enlighten, entertain and stimulate. Visitors also enjoy PhxArtKids an interactive space for children, vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, the lushly landscaped Sculpture Garden, dining at Arcadia Farms café at Phoenix Art Museum, and shopping at The Museum Store. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit PhxArt.org, or call the 24-hour recorded information line at (602) 257-1222.

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