Phoenix Art Museum

News Release

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Arizona Artist Captures Underground Railroad in Summer Exhibition at Phoenix Art Museum Stephen Marc: Passage on the Underground Railroad *on View Through September 23, 2012*

PHOENIX (July 1, 2012) – Over the course of a decade and across 32 states, photographer, digital artist, and educator Stephen Marc followed the Underground Railroad, the network of people and places that served as a gateway to freedom during slavery in the American South. Marc traced and photographed the routes of the freedom seekers, creating from these histories a thread of powerful visual narratives. Phoenix Art Museum now presents those visual narratives in *Stephen Marc: Passage On the Underground Railroad*, an exhibition of Marc's compelling digital documentary montages, through September 23, 2012 in Norton Photography Gallery.

The exhibition features more than 30 digital documentary montages in a size known as extended panoramic; many of these bold works measure more than 45 inches wide. In addition to original photography, the digitally crafted montages include images of historical materials discovered on the premises of these sites, including letters, photographs and paintings. The images blend historical artifacts, photographs and illustrations with contemporary figures and locations, often overlaid with textures and text carefully and sensitively crafted by Marc to create wide-scale images that each tell a story of this crucial chapter in American history.

Throughout his work, Marc, a fine art professor at Arizona State University, has sought to create a narrative history of many facets of the African Diaspora, opening a discourse on and inviting discussion of the history of race in America, and its lasting implications today. In his work in this area, the Underground Railroad in particular appealed to him. "The Underground Railroad is one of the first topics where we can have an inclusive and uplifting conversation about American history and race relations," Marc says. As he delved into the history and oral accounts of the Underground Railroad, he also discovered that the efforts to provide safe refuge and passage to freedom for slaves were multicultural in scope, with both white and black conductors working together to help slaves travel safely on the pathway to freedom.

Stephen Marc: Passages on the Underground Railroad brings to life both the oppression of the time, the perils of escape, and the geographical touchstones that enabled the passengers of the Underground Railroad and its conductors to maintain hope, dignity, and courage during this deeply troubled era in American history.

EXHIBITION DETAILS

The exhibition, which was organized by the University of Buffalo Art Galleries in Buffalo, New York, has traveled both nationally and internationally, and was made possible through the partnership between the Center for Creative Photography and Phoenix Art Museum. Rebecca Senf, Curator of Photography at Phoenix Art Museum, served as the curator for this local exhibition. It features more than 30 digital montages, on view in the Norton Family Photography Gallery, located on the upper level of the south wing of the Museum. This exhibition is included in Museum admission.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for more than 50 years and is the largest art museum in the Southwestern United States. Critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions are shown alongside the Museum's permanent collection of more than 18,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. The Museum also presents festivals, a comprehensive film program, live performances and educational programs designed to enlighten, entertain and stimulate visitors of all ages. Visitors also enjoy vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit PhxArt.org, or call the 24-hour recorded information line at (602) 257-1222.