

For Immediate Release: March 18, 2011

Indianapolis Museum of Art to Host Forum Inspired by *Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial*

*Speakers for Hard Truths: A Forum on Art and the Politics of Difference
will include prominent scholars and art historians*

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, March 18, 2011— Using the art and life of Thornton Dial as a point of departure, the Indianapolis Museum of Art will present a public forum to explore the status of African American artists within the mainstream contemporary art world. The event, *Hard Truths: A Forum on Art and the Politics of Difference*, will be 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, April 8, in The Toby.

The forum speakers will explore Dial's work and the relevance of black creative expression to issues of social justice across racial boundaries. The speakers are:

Julian Bond, civil rights leader, former Georgia state legislator, and former chairman of the NAACP

Joanne Cubbs, curator of *Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial*, and IMA adjunct curator of American art

Theaster Gates - installation and performance artist, and University of Chicago faculty

Fred Moten, writer and associate professor of English, Duke University

Franklin Sirmans, Terri and Michael Smooke Curator and department head, contemporary art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Greg Tate, cultural critic, musician and former *Village Voice* staff writer

Each speaker will present individually followed by a dedicated time for dialogue and response by forum speakers, local scholars and the forum audience.

Following the forum, Theaster Gates and his ensemble, The Black Monks of Mississippi, will present a performative response to the visual art of Thornton Dial. In this performance, Gates and The Black Monks improvise to create "black sound," born of the power of gospel. The event, starting at 7 p.m., combines this black spiritual music with the blues and Eastern chanting traditions to create a unique collage effect with music that corresponds—and responds—to the visual impact of Dial's art.

Tickets for *Hard Truths: A Forum on Art and the Politics of Difference* are \$15 public, \$10 IMA members and students, and can be purchased online at www.imamuseum.org or by calling 317-955-2339. Ticket includes all forum discussions, exhibition entry and the evening performance *And the Whole Yard Said Amen*. Lunch is available for purchase at Nourish Café. Teachers attending the forum are eligible for Professional Growth Plan (PGP) points.

About *Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial*

The most extensive exhibition ever mounted of Thornton Dial's painting and sculpture premiered at IMA in February and is on view through September 18. *Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial* highlights the artist's significant contribution to the field of American art and show how Dial's work speaks to the most pressing issues of our time—including the War in Iraq, 9/11, and social issues like racism and homelessness. The exhibition presents 70 of Dial's large-scale paintings, drawings and found-object sculptures spanning twenty years of his artistic career—including 25 works on view for the first time. Following the exhibition's premiere in Indianapolis, *Hard Truths* will travel to the New Orleans Museum of Art (2012), the Mint Museum (2012) and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta (2013).

About Thornton Dial

Thornton Dial was born in Alabama in 1928 and spent most of his adult life as a welder for the railway car-maker Pullman Standard Company. Beginning as a young man, Dial also made “things,” and gradually became adept in the media of painting, drawing, sculpture, and watercolor. Dial first gained recognition as a major artist in the late 1980s, with the growing interest in so-called “folk” or “outsider” art. Despite being self-taught and choosing to remain outside of the formalized art world, his work has continued to earn critical praise for its deft fusion of painting and sculpture, its emotional power, its wide-reaching social commentary, and its unique expression of a contemporary vision of the African American experience in the South. Now 82 years old, Dial continues to build his extensive body of work. In 1993, Dial’s art was shown in a major New York exhibition held simultaneously at the New Museum of Contemporary Art and the American Folk Art Museum. In 2000, Dial was a featured artist in the Whitney Biennial, and in 2005, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, mounted a solo exhibition of his paintings and assemblages produced during the first half of the decade. In 2007, Dial was the subject of an award-winning documentary produced by Alabama Public Television entitled, “Mr. Dial Has Something To Say.” His works are included in the collections of a number of major museums, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the IMA, and the Milwaukee Museum of Art.

About the Indianapolis Museum of Art

Encompassing 152 acres of gardens and grounds, the Indianapolis Museum of Art is among the 10 largest encyclopedic art museums in the United States, and features significant collections of African, American, Asian, European and contemporary art, as well as a newly established collection of design arts. The IMA offers visitors an expansive view of arts and culture through its collection of more than 54,000 works of art that span 5,000 years of history from across the world’s continents. The collections include paintings, sculpture, furniture and design objects, prints, drawings and photographs, as well as textiles and costumes.

Additionally, art, design, and nature are featured at 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park and Oldfields–Lilly House & Gardens, an historic Country Place Era estate on the IMA grounds. Beyond the Indianapolis campus, in 2011 the IMA will open to the public the recently acquired landmark Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Indiana. One of the country’s most highly regarded examples of mid-century Modernist residences, the Miller House was designed by Eero Saarinen, with interiors by Alexander Girard, and landscape design by Daniel Urban Kiley.

Recognizing the IMA’s positive impact on its community, the Museum was named a recipient of the 2009 National Medal for Museum and Library Services – the nation’s highest honor for museums and libraries. The IMA’s commitment to free general admission, programming for schools and teachers, environmental leadership and online initiatives were among cited community contributions in the Museum’s selection for the award.

Located at 4000 Michigan Road, the IMA and Lilly House are open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The IMA is closed Mondays and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s days. For more information, call 317-923-1331 or visit www.imamuseum.org.

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