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Most Comprehensive Exhibition of the Work of Thornton Dial to Premiere at the Indianapolis Museum of Art in 2011

Exhibition to cover two decades of the artist's socially and politically charged work

Following the Indianapolis premiere, the exhibition will travel to the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Mint Museum in Charlotte and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, November 9, 2010— The most extensive exhibition ever mounted of Thornton Dial's painting and sculpture will premiere at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, on view from February 25, 2011, to September 18, 2011. *Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial* will highlight 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 will present 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.

Thornton Dial's work draws inspiration from the rich expressive traditions of the black South. With no formal art education, Dial developed a truly distinctive and original style. Influenced by African American yard shows, Dial's work incorporates salvaged objects—from plastic grave flowers and children's toys to carpet scraps and animal skeletons—to create highly charged assemblages that tackle a wide range of social and political subjects. His art touches on topics ranging from the dilemmas of labor and the abuse of the natural environment to meditations on significant recent political and cultural moments—with a particular focus on the struggles of historically marginalized groups such as women, the rural poor, and the impoverished underclass. Born out of decades of the artist's own struggle as a working-class black man, Dial's work also explores the history of racial oppression in America, from slavery through the Civil Rights Movement and into the post-modern era.

"The work of Thornton Dial offers powerful insight into the most compelling political and social issues of our time," said Maxwell L. Anderson, The Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the IMA. "This exhibition will bring long-overdue recognition to Thornton Dial's remarkable career and make this important artist's work accessible to new audiences."

"Thornton Dial speaks in a powerful voice long overlooked in the canons of modern art and culture," said Joanne Cubbs, the IMA's adjunct curator of American Art. "His giant, refuse-laden canvases and found-object sculptures are rooted in a number of influential but little known art forms from the black South, while his unique merging of aesthetics, history, and social conscience stirs our imagination, inspires our humanity, and moves the discourse of contemporary art into remarkable new territory."

Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial will include 70 paintings, drawings, and sculptural works as it surveys two decades of the artist's career. Highlights of the exhibition include the 1992 work "The Last Day of Martin Luther King," which examines the life, death and transformative message of the assassinated political leader, and "Victory in Iraq" from 2004, a ten-foot canvas that incorporates barbed wire and iconic symbols of America's role in world conflict. Additionally, a Dial work recently acquired by the IMA will be on view in the exhibition—"Don't Matter How Raggy the Flag, It Still Got To Tie Us Together," which dates from 2003 and evokes the image of a torn and ravaged American flag that nevertheless serves to unite us. The earliest work included

in the exhibition will be the 1991 drawing "Refugees in Love." Among the show's many recent works is the 2009 piece "Turtle Holding Flag," which celebrates President Obama's inauguration.

Exhibition Organization and Support

Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial is organized by the Indianapolis Museum of Art and is curated by the IMA's Adjunct Curator of American Art, Joanne Cubbs. Works in the exhibition will be drawn from nine lenders, with the largest number on loan from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation, a non-profit organization that supports the preservation and documentation of African American art from the South. The exhibition is made possible through the generosity of the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation. Additional programming support provided by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Hard Truths will be accompanied by an illustrated exhibition catalogue with essays by scholars, including historian of African American art David Driskell, cultural critic Greg Tate, and exhibition curator Joanne Cubbs. Promising to be a definitive text on one of America's most remarkable contemporary artists, the catalog will feature an in-depth look at the history, themes and development of Dial's painting and sculpture. 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 and its unique expression of a contemporary vision of the African American experience in the South. Now in his early 80s, 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 featured in the prestigious 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 Philadelphia Museum of Art, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the IMA, and the Milwaukee Museum of Art.

About Contemporary Art at the IMA

The IMA's robust contemporary art program is evolving as a model for encyclopedic museums as they engage the art of our time. With a renewed focus on its contemporary collection, programs, and publications, the IMA actively seeks the works of emerging and established artists through both gift and acquisition, and organizes major traveling exhibitions and newly commissioned projects. In recent years, the IMA has worked with artists including Ingrid Calame, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Amy Cutler, Tara Donovan, Orly Genger, Jeppe Hein, Robert Irwin, Tony Feher, Josephine Meckseper, Joshua Mosley, Type A, and Ernesto Neto, among others.

In June 2010, the IMA launched its new 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park to wide critical acclaim and it has been hailed across the United States as a new model for site-responsive sculpture parks in the 21st century. Among the backdrop of woodlands, wetlands and a 35-acre lake, the Park currently includes eight commissioned art installations by artists from

throughout the world as well as the Ruth Lilly Visitor Pavilion designed by architect Marlon Blackwell. 100 Acres is one of only a few sculpture parks in the United States dedicated to the ongoing commission of site-responsive art work.

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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