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PRESS RELEASE

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Syncopated Rhythms:
20th-Century African American Art from the
George and Joyce Wein Collection at
Boston University Art Gallery

November 18, 2005 – January 22, 2006

Opening Reception Thursday, November 17, 2005, 6 - 8 pm

*Boston--Jazz impresario and Boston University Alumnus George Wein (CAS '50) and his wife Joyce collected African American art for many years. The exhibition *Syncopated Rhythms: 20th-Century African American Art from the George and Joyce Wein Collection*, curated by Patricia Hills, Professor of Art History at Boston University and Melissa Renn, Jan and Warren Adelson Curatorial Fellow in American Art, will showcase the Weins's outstanding collection of sixty works including paintings, sculpture, drawings and a painted story quilt.*

This Boston University Art Gallery exhibition is the first time the collection will be shown publicly. The artists include: Charles Alston, Benny Andrews, Ernie Barnes, Richmond Barthé, Romare Bearden, John Biggers, Bruce Brice, Elizabeth Catlett, Eldzier Cortor, Allan Rohan Crite, Miles Davis, Beauford Delaney, Joseph Delaney, Aaron Douglas, Minnie Evans, Palmer Hayden, Oliver Johnson, William H. Johnson, Lois Mailou Jones, Wifredo Lam, Jacob Lawrence, Hughie Lee-Smith, Norman Lewis, Sister Gertrude Morgan, Faith Ringgold, Betye Saar, Augusta Savage, Bob Thompson, Charles White, Michael Kelly Williams, William T. Williams, Ellis Wilson, John Wilson, Hale Woodruff and Richard Yarde.

The exhibition comprises a range of works done in the late 1920s through the 1990s and is particularly strong in works of the 1940s to the 1970s. Included are both figurative and abstract works, many with the theme of music and musicians. Some artists have but a single work in the exhibition, but others, such as Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Norman Lewis, Allan

Rohan Crite, Beauford Delaney, and Hughie Lee-Smith are represented by several works. In short, the exhibition presents an excellent survey of the accomplishments of African American artists of the last century. Illustrated in full color, the accompanying 100-page exhibition catalogue written by Hills and Renn, with a foreword by Ed Bradley, is the first time that many of the works from the collection will be published.

Syncopation is defined as “a shifting of the normal accent, usually by stressing the normally unaccented beats,” as Hills notes in her catalogue essay, “The Expressive Modernism of 20th-Century African American Art.” The generation of African American artists who came of age in the 1920s, when ragtime was evolving into jazz and our story begins, did just that in their art. They shifted the beats and emphasized subjects (African Americans in American life) rarely shown in American museums and art galleries. In their styles also, they probed the images and sensations of their memories of African American cultural practices to produce the unexpected. Beginning with Palmer Hayden and continuing with Jacob Lawrence, up to the present day with Benny Andrews, many African American painters, even those academically trained as artists, consciously gravitated to off-beat syncopated styles—such as folk styles, simplified forms, and silhouetted shapes, rather than the Western tradition of chiaroscuro painting. By rejecting “art as usual” the artists in the Wein collection transformed themselves into modernist artists—but, like jazz, it was a modernism on their own terms.

The Weins have been active in the worlds of music and art throughout their lives. A professional pianist from his early teens, George Wein went on to lead his own band, playing in venues in and around his native Boston. In 1947 at a James P. Johnson and Sidney Bechet concert at the Boston Opera House, George met Joyce Alexander, who was then a junior at Simmons College in Boston. Joyce also shared a passion for jazz and art, and she wrote a jazz column for the Simmons newspaper. In 1950 George Wein opened his own jazz club in Boston, formed the Storyville Record label and began his career as a jazz entrepreneur.

Wein is best known for creating and organizing the Newport Jazz Festival, the first held in 1954. In 1963 Joyce and George Wein, along with Pete and Toshi Seeger founded the Newport Folk Festival. The Weins also created the Newport Opera Festival, Newport Jazz Festival, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and the Grande Parade du Jazz in Nice, France. In 1969 Wein established Festival Productions, Inc, which still produces hundreds of musical events each year. Most recently, Wein published his autobiography, *Myself Among Others: A Life in Music*, which chronicles his life in jazz and was recognized by the Jazz Journalists Association as 2004’s best book about jazz. In 2005 he was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters Fellowship. The Weins have a longstanding history of involvement with philanthropy and the arts, including the establishment of the Joyce and George Wein Chair of African American Studies at Boston University and the Alexander Family Endowed Scholarship Fund at Simmons College.

Throughout their 38 years together, George and Joyce Wein enjoyed a wonderful life filled with the things they loved most: music, art and each other. Joyce Wein passed away August 15, 2005, before seeing this particular dream fulfilled.

OPENING RECEPTION:

Thursday, November 17, 2005, 6 - 8 pm; Boston University Art Gallery, 855 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Check the website for additional programming and schedules.

Please call the gallery or visit the BU Art Gallery website at www.bu.edu/ART for events and programming information during the season. All exhibitions and events are free to the public.

IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Information

Boston University Art Gallery 855 Commonwealth Avenue Boston, MA 02215 TEL (617) 353-3329 FAX (617) 353-4509	Gallery Hours Tuesday-Friday 10 am –5 pm Saturday & Sunday 1 – 5 pm www.bu.edu/ART
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The **Boston University Art Gallery** (BUAG) is a non-profit art gallery geared toward an interdisciplinary interpretation of art, and committed to a culturally inclusive viewpoint that expands the boundaries of the museum. Exhibitions focus on international, national and regional art developments chiefly in the 20th century; seek to present the cultural and historical context of art, and to acknowledge the artistic contributions of under-recognized sectors of the population. BUAG is located at 855 Commonwealth Avenue, inside the College of Fine Arts at Boston University (BU West T stop on the B Green Line).

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