News Release

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*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

EXHIBITION: Class Pictures: Photographs by Dawoud Bey

DATES: October 24 through December 18, 2009

EXHIBITION RECEPTION: Sunday, October 25, 2009, 2-4 p.m.
Artist scheduled to attend
Free and open to the public

LECTURE: Speaker Dawoud Bey
Monday, October 26, 2009, 7-9 p.m.
Room A133 Life Sciences Building

RELATED EVENTS: See http://artmuseum.msu.edu/ for details

LOCATION: Kresge Art Museum
Michigan State University Campus, East Lansing, MI

Dawoud Bey photography exhibition challenges stereotypes of U.S. teens
Kresge Art Museum, MSU

EAST LANSING, MI — For the past fifteen years, Dawoud Bey has made striking, large-scale color portraits of students at high schools across the United States. Class Pictures: Photographs by Dawoud Bey brings together 40 images depicting teens from a wide economic, social, and ethnic spectrum. Intensely attentive to their poses and gestures, but also to the world in which they live, Bey has created a highly diverse group portrait of a generation that challenges teenage stereotypes. The exhibition is on view at Kresge Art Museum, Michigan State University, October 24 – December 18, 2009. The exhibition reception will take place on Sunday, October 25, 2-4 p.m., with an opportunity to meet the artist Dawoud Bey.

Bey spent three to four weeks in each school, taking formal portraits of individual students, each made in a classroom or other school setting during one forty-five-minute period. At the start of the sitting, each subject wrote a brief autobiographical statement. By turns poignant, funny, or harrowing, these revealing words are an integral part of the project, and the subject’s statement accompanies each photograph in the exhibition and accompanying book. Together, the words and images in Class Pictures offer unusually respectful and perceptive portraits that establish Dawoud Bey as one of the best portraitists at work today. Bey explains, “I think what has been driving and directing my work for a long time is this idea that through making pictures of young people I can affect viewers in such a way that they too can become invested in these subjects.”

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Curator April Kingsley notes that Bey was clever and thoughtful when posing his subjects. Because of the uniform size of the images, the unsmiling faces and casual clothes of the subjects, and the amount of space the figure fills in the frame, the indifferent observer may feel these are another example of today’s angry youth. Kingsley refutes this notion, and says that “upon closer observation, they really appear to have a grown-up presence, and a non-smiling face should not be interpreted as an angry face.” Bey challenges us to look beyond the countenance and read the accompany text, written by each subject. “The images do not reveal who the subjects are: rich, poor, struggling with hardship or sorrow”, says Kingsley. “This is revealed in the subject’s statement. There is, though, an overall feeling that they want to do something in this world – make a difference. There is a very real earnestness to their statements, whether from an unwed teen mother or one who watched their parent suffer a terminal illness, a feeling of hopefulness prevails.”

Aperture, a not-for-profit organization devoted to photography and the visual arts, has organized this traveling exhibition and produced the accompanying publication, a 164-page monograph, Class Pictures. The exhibition is sponsored by the Office of the Provost, and Office for Inclusion & Intercultural Initiatives, Michigan State University.

**Dawoud Bey will be the featured speaker at 7 pm, Monday, October 26, 2009, Room A133 Life Sciences Building, Michigan State University, as part of the Department of Art & Art History Guest Lecture Series.**

Admission is free to Kresge Art Museum. Kresge Art Museum is located on the first floor of the Kresge Art Center at the intersection of Physics and Auditorium Roads, on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI. Museum hours are Monday through Friday, 10 to 5 p.m., Thursday until 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The museum is closed November 26-29, 2009. For additional information, call (517) 355-7631 or visit www.artmuseum.msu.edu.

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**Caption /Credit for attached IMAGE:** Dawoud Bey (American, born 1953) Shalanta, 2003, chromogenic print, 40 x 30 inches, Kresge Art Museum, Michigan State University. Image courtesy of Aperture.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The photograph of each work must be reproduced in its entirety; no cropping is permitted without prior approval. A specific detail must be indicated in the picture caption. Over-printing on a reproduction is not permitted.

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