

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****HIGH MUSEUM OF ART TO PRESENT FIRST RETROSPECTIVE OF SOUTHERN ARTIST RONALD LOCKETT**

**ATLANTA, June 16, 2016** – The High Museum of Art will present the groundbreaking retrospective “Fever Within: The Art of Ronald Lockett,” the first comprehensive exhibition of work by the passionately inspired and little-understood figure whose work challenges the boundaries between self-taught and mainstream contemporary American artists.

On view Oct. 9, 2016, through Jan. 8, 2017, the exhibition will explore the full range of Lockett’s innovative and evocative paintings, sculptures and assemblages, offering in-depth insight into his process and the creative impulses that propelled him. Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, Lockett (American, 1965–1998) had by the time of his death at age 32 produced an estimated 400 artworks that embody a stunning evolution of artistic practice.

“The High has made an institutional commitment to collecting, exhibiting and championing the work of Southern self-taught artists, and our desire is to foster recognition of these artists in the larger history of American art,” said Rand Suffolk, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director of the High. “We are honored to present this important exhibition, which gives much-deserved attention to Lockett’s powerful voice and significance as a contemporary artist.”

“I am proud to bring this show to the High, especially after our recent engagement with Jean-Michel Basquiat. Here is another artist whose talent and vision burned so brightly only to disappear long before his time,” said Katherine Jentleson, Merrie and Dan Boone curator of folk and self-taught art. “In Lockett, our audiences will discover an artist whose body of work is both beautiful and bleak, challenging and inspiring, elevated yet down to earth.”

Raised in Bessemer, Ala., Lockett was heavily influenced by other self-taught African American artists in his close-knit community, including his cousin Thornton Dial (American, 1928–2016), who mentored and encouraged him. At the High, “Fever Within” will feature an exclusive installation of large-scale sculpture by Lockett and his contemporaries, linking him to those artists who emerged from the African American steel communities of Birmingham and Bessemer, Alabama, over the past 30 years.

Participating in the tradition of painting and sculpture that emerged among his self-taught peers, Lockett drew upon found materials, such as metal from abandoned buildings and fences, as well as a symbolic cast of animal avatars to address themes of struggle, survival and injustice in contexts that ranged from the autobiographical to the national. He explored events in 20th-century history that he sought to understand better, including acts of large-scale violence and terrorism like the Holocaust and the bombings of Hiroshima and the Oklahoma City Federal Building. He also grappled with subjects such as racial and political tumult, including the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and the unfulfilled promises of the civil rights movement, environmental

degradation and religious faith. In his final years, following his diagnosis with HIV/AIDS, Lockett explored themes of mortality, salvation and remembrance. This exhibition will feature more than 50 works, including several from the High's collection, that emphasize the powerful subjects the artist explored over the course of his career.

“Fever Within” is organized by the Ackland Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is curated by Bernard L. Herman, UNC-Chapel Hill's George B. Tindall distinguished professor of Southern studies and folklore, in close collaboration with the Souls Grown Deep Foundation, an Atlanta-based organization dedicated to documenting, researching, preserving and exhibiting the work of vernacular African American artists of the American South.

Prior to its presentation at the High, the exhibition will be on view at the American Folk Art Museum in New York (June 21–Sept. 18, 2016) and will culminate at the Ackland Art Museum (Jan. 27–April 9, 2017).

### **“Fever Within: The Art of Ronald Lockett” Publication**

The exhibition is accompanied by a scholarly publication, edited by Bernard L. Herman and published by the University of North Carolina Press. The book includes 60 full-color plates of Lockett's paintings and assemblages as well as written contributions by Herman, Jentleson, Paul Arnett (Souls Grown Deep Foundation), Sharon Patricia Holland (Duke University), Thomas J. Lax (The Museum of Modern Art) and Colin Rhodes (University of Melbourne).

### **Exhibition Organization and Support**

“Fever Within: The Art of Ronald Lockett” is organized by the Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The exhibition has been made possible in part by awards from the William R. Kenan, Jr., Charitable Trust and the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding has been provided by the Department of American Studies Chair's Discretionary Fund for Southern Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

### **About the High Museum of Art Folk and Self-Taught Art Department**

The High Museum of Art is dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists and is distinguished as the first encyclopedic art museum in North America to have a full-time curator devoted to folk and self-taught art. The collection features works by such celebrated artists as Bill Traylor, Thornton Dial, Ulysses Davis, Sam Doyle, William Hawkins, Mattie Lou O'Kelley, Ronald Lockett and Louis Monza and possesses the largest collection of works by Georgia's Howard Finster outside of the Paradise Garden in Summerville, Ga. The collection of more than 900 objects also boasts work by artists from beyond the South, such as Henry Darger, Martin Ramírez and Joseph Yoakum.

### **About the High Museum of Art**

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 15,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American art; a substantial collection of historical and contemporary decorative arts and design; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk and self-taught art, and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. Through its education department, the High offers programs and

experiences that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit [high.org](http://high.org).

### **About The Woodruff Arts Center**

The Woodruff Arts Center is one of the largest arts centers in the world, home to the Tony Award–winning Alliance Theatre, the Grammy Award–winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the High Museum of Art, the leading art museum in the Southeast. Each year, these centers of artistic excellence play host to more than 1.2 million patrons at The Woodruff Arts Center’s midtown Atlanta location, one of the only arts centers in the United States to host both visual and performing arts on a single campus. The Woodruff Arts Center also offers remarkable educational programming through each of its arts partners. Through the combined efforts of its arts partners, The Woodruff Arts Center serves more than 300,000 students annually and is the largest arts educator in Georgia. [www.woodruffcenter.org](http://www.woodruffcenter.org)

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