



HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DISCOVER THE ART OF SOUTHERN BACKROADS AT THE HIGH

With sculptures, paintings and rarely seen photographs, a new exhibition explores the unconventional character of the Southern avant-garde

ATLANTA, Nov. 29, 2018 – This spring, the High Museum of Art will present “Way Out There: The Art of Southern Backroads,” an exhibition that celebrates the region’s self-taught artists and offers a rare look at how their worlds converged with contemporary American photography and literature.

On view March 2 through May 19, 2019, this exhibition is the first collaboration between the Museum’s folk and self-taught art and photography departments. Merrie and Dan Boone Curator of Folk and Self-taught Art Katherine Jentleson and Associate Curator of Photography Gregory Harris drew inspiration for the exhibition from an unpublished manuscript for a guidebook of Southern self-taught artists by late poet and publisher Jonathan Williams (1929–2008), who had road-tripped around the South with photographers Guy Mendes and Roger Manley in the 1980s and ’90s. Williams intended to publish the manuscript through the press of The Jargon Society, an organization he had founded during his student days at Black Mountain College, which “championed outsiders, mavericks and the neglected.”

The exhibition will bring the spirit of his book to life with more than 50 sculptures, paintings and other works from the High’s collection presented alongside approximately 100 of Mendes’ and Manley’s photographs, many on view for the very first time. Artworks in the show represent more than a dozen artists, including Eddie Owens Martin (“St. EOM”), Sam Doyle, Mose Tolliver, Thornton Dial, Edgar Tolson, Georgia Blizzard, Sister Gertrude Morgan, Howard Finster and many others.

In conjunction with the exhibition, [Institute 193](#) will publish Williams’ text as “Walks to the Paradise Garden: A Lowdown Southern Odyssey,” a companion publication featuring short entries documenting his travels, illustrated by Mendes’ and Manley’s photographs, with an afterword by Jentleson and Harris.

“The High’s self-taught art and photography collections are among the nation’s best, with particular strengths in art of the southeastern United States. ‘Way Out There’ is an unparalleled opportunity to make connections across those departments, and the exhibition and publication will be particularly meaningful to our regional audiences, who personally know these Southern

backroads or others like them,” said Rand Suffolk, the High’s Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director.

Jentleson adds, “With this project, we are celebrating the important but often neglected legacy of unconventional Southern creatives and highlighting how these artists truly embraced and inspired one another. We are thrilled to bring works from our collection together with photographs that will transport viewers to these Southern artists’ worlds. After seeing the show, we hope our visitors will take to the road themselves to explore the way-out-there people and places that inspire them.”

The exhibition’s first gallery will prime visitors for a virtual road trip through the South with photomurals of shots by Mendes and Manley. Bold text-based graphics adapted from Williams’ poetry will convey the inspiration he drew from roadside signs. The subsequent galleries will be organized roughly by region, starting with the Piedmont plateau, moving briefly through Appalachia, and ending with the Mississippi Delta.

Along with individual artworks, the galleries will be anchored by environmental installations that will replicate the majesty that Williams, and other travelers, would have experienced first-hand when visiting the artists during their lifetimes. Standout moments will include sci-fi-inspired art by Royal Robertson, the multicultural utopia of Eddie Owens Martin, commentary on human nature in concrete and pencil by Dilmus Hall and a feminist gallery of tin-scrap women by Mary T. Smith.

Mendes’ and Manley’s portrait and landscape photographs from the artists’ homes and yards will also be interspersed throughout the galleries.

“Mendes and Manley aspired not only to record the distant and difficult to access, but to engage in a layered visual conversation with their fellow artists. The photographs in the exhibition emphasize their impulse to create evocative images while also interpreting and preserving the creations of others,” said Harris. “They so beautifully captured the distinct characters of their subjects and the incredible environments they created.”

“Way Out There: The Art of Southern Backroads” will span the first and second levels of the High’s Anne Cox Chambers Wing. The companion publication “Walks to the Paradise Garden: A Lowdown Southern Odyssey” will be published by Institute 193 in spring 2019 and will be available in the High’s Museum Shop.

Exhibition Organization and Support

“Way Out There: The Art of Southern Backroads” is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. This exhibition is made possible by Premier Exhibition Series Partner Bank of America; Exhibition Series Sponsors Delta Air Lines, Inc., and Turner; Premier Exhibition Series Supporters the Antinori Foundation, Sarah and Jim Kennedy, and Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporter Anne Cox Chambers Foundation; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporters Tom and Susan Wardell, and Rod Westmoreland; and Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters the Ron and Lisa Brill Family Charitable Trust, Lucinda W. Bunnell, Corporate Environments, Marcia and John Donnell, W. Daniel Ebersole and Sarah Eby-Ebersole, Peggy

Foreman, Robin and Hilton Howell, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, and Margot and Danny McCaul. Generous support is also provided by the Alfred and Adele Davis Exhibition Endowment Fund, Anne Cox Chambers Exhibition Fund, Barbara Stewart Exhibition Fund, Marjorie and Carter Crittenden, Dorothy Smith Hopkins Exhibition Endowment Fund, Eleanor McDonald Storza Exhibition Endowment Fund, The Fay and Barrett Howell Exhibition Fund, Forward Arts Foundation Exhibition Endowment Fund, Helen S. Lanier Endowment Fund, Isobel Anne Fraser–Nancy Fraser Parker Exhibition Endowment Fund, John H. and Wilhelmina D. Harland Exhibition Endowment Fund, Katherine Murphy Riley Special Exhibition Endowment Fund, Margareta Taylor Exhibition Fund, Massey Charitable Trust, RJR Nabisco Exhibition Endowment Fund, and Dr. Diane L. Wisebram.

About the High Museum of Art

Located in the heart of Atlanta, Georgia, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize–winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 17,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from pre-history through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

###

DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Media contact:

Marci Tate Davis
Manager of Public Relations
Tel: 404-733-4585
E-mail: marci.davis@high.org