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**THE ART COLLECTION OF MAYA ANGELOU OFFERS A NEW VIEW
INTO THE LIFE OF AN AMERICAN CULTURAL ICON**

New York— On **Tuesday, September 15, 2015**, Swann Galleries' African-American Fine Art department will offer **The Art Collection of Maya Angelou**, an exclusive auction of 50 works of art (in 44 lots) collected by Dr. Angelou during her lifetime. The collection hung in her private residences, with only a few pieces occasionally lent to museums and institutions, making this the first time the majority of these works have been publicly exhibited.

Known best as an award-winning poet, writer, educator and activist among many other titles, relatively few people outside her personal circle were aware of Dr. Angelou's relationship to visual art. She cultivated friendships with many important African-American artists, both inspiring and finding inspiration in their work.

One piece inspired by Dr. Angelou is a story quilt by Faith Ringgold titled *Maya's Quilt of Life*, 1989, (estimate: \$150,000 to \$250,000). A quintessential example of Ringgold's intricate art form, the quilt was commissioned by Oprah Winfrey as a birthday gift for Dr. Angelou, and includes text from her poems and memoirs. This is the first of Ringgold's story quilts to come to auction.

Other works directly inspired by Dr. Angelou include Alonzo Adam's *Phenomenal Woman*, watercolor and pencil, 1993 (\$3,000 to \$5,000), which includes an inscription from the artist to Dr. Angelou, and Melvin Edward's *OWWA Maya*, welded steel, 2011 (\$8,000 to \$12,000). Edward's presented the sculpture to Dr. Angelou in 2011, when she was honored at the Organization of Women Writers of Africa's twentieth anniversary celebration.

As a longtime resident of North Carolina, Dr. Angelou collected works by many North Carolinian artists, including John Biggers. His bustling panoramic oil painting *Kumasi Market*, oil and acrylic on masonite board, 1962, reflects the artist's experiences in Ghana in the late 1950s and highlights his focus on the societal importance of African women (\$100,000 to \$150,000). The sale also features *Ethiopian Women*, conté crayon on paper, 1969 (\$15,000 to \$25,000), as well as a range of lithographs from the

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later part of Biggers' career depicting the shotgun houses and geometric quilt designs that became common in his work.

Several works from another North Carolina-born artist, Romare Bearden, whose work also frequently features strong female figures, are included in the sale. The third work from his *Rituals of the Obeah* exhibition to come to auction, the strikingly colorful watercolor *The Obeah's Choice*, 1984 (\$20,000 to \$30,000), conjures the traditions and myths of Bearden's second home on the Caribbean island of St. Martin. Several other watercolors are included in the collection, as well as a print inscribed to Dr. Angelou by the artist, *Falling Star*, color lithograph, 1980 (\$3,000 to \$5,000).

Another highlight of the sale comes from a South Carolinian artist, Jonathan Green, whose painting *Wading in the Surf*, acrylic on masonite board, 1989 (\$8,000 to \$12,000), is inscribed "To Maya, Warmly."

Dr. Angelou was also an avid supporter of female artists. Her collection includes works from Phoebe Beasley, Elizabeth Catlett and Samella Lewis, among others. There are two Beasley collages, including *Catnap*, mixed media on canvas, 1980 (\$4,000 to \$6,000), an excellent example of the window her works give into the everyday lives of African-American families. Elizabeth Catlett's distinctive lithograph, *Two Generations*, 1979, showcases the celebration of women so often seen in Catlett's art (\$4,000 to \$6,000).

Rounding out the sale is a painting by Dr. Angelou herself, *The Protector of Home and Family*, oil on canvas, 1969 (\$15,000 to \$25,000). Painted shortly after the completion of her acclaimed autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Dr. Angelou's painting is a strong visual statement of African-American women's courage and strength.

The auction preview will be open to the public, with an exhibition open Wednesday, September 9 through Friday, September 11 from 10am to 6pm; Saturday, September 12 from noon to 5pm; Monday September 14 from 10am to 6pm; and Tuesday September 15 from 10am to noon.

An illustrated auction catalogue will be available for \$35 from Swann Galleries, Inc., 104 East 25th Street, New York, NY 10010, or online at www.swanngalleries.com.

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For further information and to make advance arrangements to bid by telephone during the auction, please contact Nigel Freeman at 212-254-4710, extension 33, or via e-mail at nfreeman@swanngalleries.com.

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