

Brooks Museum and Four Memphis Organizations Exhibits *Facing Change* Art Therapy Access

- Opening reception Saturday, January 18 from 11 am to 12:30pm.
- *Facing Change* on view through February 16, 2014.

Memphis, TN (January 23, 2014) – Memphis Brooks Museum of Art announces the opening of *Facing Change*, a year of art therapy collaborations with the Memphis VA Medical Center, Shelby County School's Day Treatment Program at South Park Elementary School, Tennessee Baptist Children's Home, and University of Tennessee's Shelby County Relative Caregiver Program. The exhibition will be on display in the Brooks' Education Gallery through February 16. The opening reception was held on Saturday, January 18 from 11 am to 12:30 pm, with nearly 100 of the program's participants and family members in attendance.

The museum's long-standing Art Therapy Access Program partners with one organization in the community each year to offer art therapy sessions with a Board Certified Art Therapist, museum tours, family/caregiver days, and an exhibition of the resulting work. Though in 2013, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Tennessee Arts Commission, the museum collaborated with four local partners to expand the program and establish an online resource for other museum professionals interested in starting similar programs.

Art Therapist Sarah Hamil says, "This program is very innovative and unique. The response from the community and the participants has far exceeded our expectations. The wonderful museum environment, the artifacts, and the museum personnel make a tremendous impact on the therapeutic process. This gives the participants the opportunity to be seen and heard in the community, which is affirming and healing."

Art Therapy is a mental health profession that uses the creative process of art-making to improve and enhance the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. It is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self-esteem and self-awareness, and achieve insight.

Over the course of 2013, the Brooks worked with two Board Certified Art Therapists - Karen Peacock and Sarah Hamil - to provide weekly art therapy sessions offsite as well as monthly tours and art therapy sessions at the Brooks. These therapists worked with two groups of participants from each partner organization, for a total of 85 participants,

ages 5 to 75. Of those participants, Peacock says, "They developed meaningful relationships with the museum . . . and were able to relate their personal lives to many pieces of art they viewed in the galleries."

In the art-making sessions, the participants worked with a variety of materials, but the primary project was mask-making. Using strips of plaster gauze stretched over a mold, each individual created a mask to represent themselves, or a particular aspect of themselves. They were able to add 3-dimensional elements to the masks using found objects and newspaper, and then the masks were painted. Through mask-making, participants were able to reshape different parts of themselves, and see them in a new way. T.B., a student at South Park Elementary School, said of his experience in the Art Therapy Access Program, "I liked the art at the museum, and I liked creating my mask."

Through the art therapy sessions offsite and at the museum, the therapists develop art-making directives that work on participants' self-expression and identity. A primary goal of the program is to introduce the museum as a positive environment and a forum of self-expression, and to learn to apply that expression in people's lives. Deanna Nick, Ministry Assistant with the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home, says, "Participating in art therapy gave our residents a healthy way to communicate their emotions. Visiting the various exhibits at the Brooks Museum sparked their creativity and helped them to better understand art as a form of expression."

The Memphis Brooks Museum of Art is located at 1934 Poplar Avenue in Overton Park. For more information on this, and all other exhibitions and programs, call (901)544-6200 or visit www.brooksmuseum.org.

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