

# ELIZABETH CATLETT SCULPTURE:

A FIFTY-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE  
FEBRUARY 8, 1998 - JUNE 7, 1998 • SOUTH GALLERY

For Elizabeth Catlett, a renowned artist who was born in Washington, DC in 1915, sculpture is a life passion. "I am fascinated by the entire sculpting process. I like the feel of it; I like pounding the clay and getting it into shape and building the armature and all of that. And I like seeing things develop from inside out," says Catlett.

*Elizabeth Catlett Sculpture: A Fifty-Year Retrospective* opens at the Neuberger Museum of Art on February 8, 1998 and continues through June 7. It features 60 bronze, marble, stone, terra cotta and wood sculptures created during the past half-century. In presenting the Catlett retrospective, which is curated by Lucinda H. Gedeon, Ph.D., Director of the Neuberger Museum of Art, the Museum is providing visitors with an opportunity to view the results of five decades of Ms. Catlett's significant achievements.

Elizabeth Catlett's highly distinctive style is rooted in her African-American heritage and blended with her life experiences. The selections of art exhibited in the retrospective provide a broad overview of Catlett's political, social and feminist consciousness.

In 1947, reacting, in part, to the adverse racial climate prevailing in the United States, Ms. Catlett moved to Mexico. Today, she resides there with her husband,

minimum embellishment, and deeply felt sense of movement and posture that characterize her work today. There is a modern presence in Catlett's work evidencing influences from modernist sculptors including Henry Moore and Ossip Zadkine.

In 1940, at the start of her career, Catlett won critical acclaim at the American Negro Exposition for her limestone sculpture, *Mother and Child*. She later defined her aesthetic vision while living in Mexico City and working at the Graphic Arts Workshop, Taller de Gráfica Popular. "Her work communicates the importance of personal and social history. It retains the stamp of psychological encounters, the drama of race and class differences, the longing both for privacy and for solidarity. The past is ever present in Catlett's figures. So is the affirmation of the reality and necessity of struggle," writes catalogue essayist Michael Brenson.

"Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, images of women and the theme of mother and child remained central to Catlett's work," says Lucinda Gedeon. "Ever mindful of her role as a spokesperson for her people, Catlett's work reflects a balance between her political, emotional, intellectual and feminist sensibilities."

The exhibition will be accompanied by a 130-page illustrated monograph featuring essays by Lowery Stokes Sims, Ph.D., Curator, 20th Century Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Michael Brenson, Ph.D., noted art historian and critic. Published by the Neuberger Museum of Art, the monograph will be distributed by the University of Washington Press. Following its Neuberger Museum of Art debut, the Catlett exhibition will travel to four other venues: Blaffer Gallery, University of Texas at Houston; The Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland; the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; and Spelman College Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia.

*Elizabeth Catlett Sculpture: A Fifty-Year Retrospective* is funded, in part, by The Andy Warhol Foundation, The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc., Friends of the Neuberger Museum of Art, Neuberger & Berman Exhibition Fund, and the Westchester Arts Council. The Henry Luce Foundation was established in 1936 by the late Henry R. Luce, co-founder and editor-in-chief of Time Inc. It is the only major foundation whose art program is devoted exclusively to American art.

**February 7  
Members Reception**  
6:00-7:30 p.m.  
**Gala Award Dinner**  
7:30 - 10:00 p.m.  
Call 914-251-6115 for reservations  
and information



Elizabeth Catlett, *Seated Woman*, 1992, cedar, Collection of Camille O. and William H. Cosby, Jr.

artist Francisco Mora. Although an expatriate, Catlett remains intensely loyal to her African-American roots and frequently celebrates African-American heroes and heroines in her work. American, African and pre-Columbian cultural influences pervade her art and inform her images of mother and child, a theme found throughout her *oeuvre*.

Catlett developed a figural style at Howard University early in her career. Later, at the University of Iowa, under the tutelage of American regionalist painter Grant Wood, she perfected the simple, massive planes,



## ELIZABETH CATLETT RECEIVES MUSEUM LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Neuberger Museum of Art established its Lifetime Achievement Award to honor individual artists for their creative accomplishment and attainment. On February 7, 1998, a Gala Lifetime Achievement Award Dinner will be held to celebrate the naming of sculptor Elizabeth Catlett as the fourth recipient of the Museum's Achievement Award. The presentation coincides with the opening of *Elizabeth Catlett Sculpture: A Fifty-Year Retrospective*.

Funds raised at the dinner will support

the purchase of a work of art by Ms. Catlett for the Museum's permanent collection.

In April, 1997, June Wayne, a noted Los Angeles artist, was the recipient of the first Lifetime Achievement Award. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Edward Albee, and Chairman Emeritus of the New York State Council on the Arts Kitty Carlisle Hart, an accomplished actress and singer, were named as the second and third Award recipients at the Museum's Black and White Masked Ball in November.