



## **Artist, Musician and Poet Patti Smith's New Photography and Installation Work to be Presented at the Wadsworth Atheneum**

**HARTFORD, Conn., May 26, 2011** – From her explorations of artistic expression with friend and vanguard photographer Robert Mapplethorpe in the 1960s and 70s to her profound influence on the nascent punk rock scene in the late 1970s and 80s, pioneering artist, musician, and poet Patti Smith has made her mark on the American cultural landscape throughout her 40-year career. This fall, an exhibition of Smith's work will premiere at the Wadsworth Atheneum, featuring over sixty new photographs and multimedia installations created between 2002 and 2011.

The first museum presentation of Smith's work in the United States in nearly ten years, *Patti Smith: Camera Solo* will highlight the continual symbiosis between Smith's photography and her interest in poetry and literature and is on view from October 21, 2011 – February 19, 2012.

"Patti Smith's photography, shaped over decades of observation, commemorates the artists, poets, authors, family and friends from whom she draws inspiration. Modest in scale and shot solely in black and white, they are sometimes disquieting and often beautiful, but always intimate," said Susan Talbott, Director and CEO, Wadsworth Atheneum. "We are thrilled to present this work at the Wadsworth Atheneum where Smith's mentor Sam Wagstaff was curator and the work of her dear friend Robert Mapplethorpe was the subject of two separate exhibitions."

*Patti Smith: Camera Solo* will present approximately sixty black-and-white silver gelatin prints photographed with her vintage Polaroid camera. In the era of digital imaging and manipulation, Smith's works champion the use of photography in its most classical sense: as a tool to document a "found" moment. Their diminutive scale and diffused lighting emphasize the subtleties and the importance of each subject, as in *Arthur Rimbaud's Utensils* or *Robert's Slippers*, where the objects are tightly-cropped and detached from their surroundings.

Smith's multi-media installations, two of which will be on view at the Wadsworth, combine written word, photography, and three-dimensional objects that appear in her photographs. A new installation created specifically for this exhibition will be inspired by one of Smith's greatest muses, the nineteenth-century French poet Arthur Rimbaud. The exhibition's opening event on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 will take place on

Rimbaud's birthday and, as she has done annually since 1974, Smith will stage a performance honoring him that evening.

During the course of the exhibition, Smith will make several appearances at the museum—including the performance honoring Rimbaud, a book-signing of her National Book Award-winning memoir *Just Kids*, and an evening performance of music and spoken word. The exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue that includes an interview with the artist.

The Wadsworth is currently undergoing a comprehensive renovation across all five of the museum's buildings, which will result in the addition of 8,000 square feet of reclaimed gallery space, a 14% increase, and the complete reinstallation of the museum's permanent collection. Marking the completion of the first phase of the renovation, the Morgan Great Hall reopened in May 2011 after a year-long closure, and has been reinstalled for the first time with large-scale works from the museum's Contemporary art collection by artists such as Willem de Kooning, Helen Frankenthaler, Andreas Gursky, Robert Rauschenberg, Sean Scully, Frank Stella, and Andy Warhol, among others. The renovation will also bring significant improvements for visitors, including improved wayfinding, new interior and exterior signage, bi-lingual signage, and space for commissioned art on the exterior of the museum. The entire renovation project is slated for completion in 2013.

Support for the exhibition is provided by The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, The Calvin Klein Family Foundation, and The Larsen Photography Fund.

### **Patti Smith**

Patti Smith (b. 1946) began as a visual artist and has been making drawings and taking photographs since the late 1960's. In recent years her practice has expanded to include installation. The artist has been represented by Robert Miller Gallery since 1978. In 2008, Smith was the subject of *Patti Smith Land 250* at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporaine, Paris, and *Written Portrait - Patti Smith* at Artium Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain. *Strange Messenger: The Work of Patti Smith*, a three hundred -work retrospective, was organized by The Andy Warhol Museum in 2002 and traveled to numerous venues including the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, and the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Her work has also been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum Eki, Kyoto; Haus der Kunst, Munich; Triennale di Milano, Milan; Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels and the Pompidou Center in Paris. *Just Kids*, a memoir of her remarkable relationship with Robert Mapplethorpe during the epochal days of New York City and the Chelsea Hotel in the late sixties and seventies, won her the 2010 National Book Award in the nonfiction category. Her 1975 album *Horses*, established Smith as one of most original and important musical artists of her generation and was followed by nine releases, including *Radio Ethiopia*; *Easter*; *Dream of Life*; *Gone Again*; and *Trampin'*. She continues to perform throughout the world and in 2007 was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In July of 2005 she was presented with the prestigious insignia of Commander of the Order

of the Arts and Letters, an esteemed French cultural honor. In May 2011, Smith won the Polar Music Prize, Sweden's most prestigious music award.

### **Contemporary Art at the Wadsworth Atheneum**

Promoting contemporary art has always been an important expression of the museum's mission, beginning with founder Daniel Wadsworth's support of the fledgling Hudson River School in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1975, the Wadsworth was the first to embrace the idea of contemporary art in an "encyclopedic" museum through its MATRIX program, an ongoing series of single-artist exhibitions that have showcased more than 150 artists, providing many with their first solo museum exhibition in the United States—including Adrian Piper, Louise Lawler, Janine Antoni, and Dawoud Bey. Many MATRIX artists, such as Sol LeWitt, Willem de Kooning, Christo, Andy Warhol, Cindy Sherman and Gerhard Richter, are now considered seminal figures in contemporary art. Recent MATRIX artists include Kitty Kraus, Justin Lowe, Kim Schoenstadt, and Rashaad Newsome.

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is located at 600 Main St. in Hartford, Connecticut. The Museum is open Wednesdays to Fridays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, please visit [www.wadsworthatheneum.org](http://www.wadsworthatheneum.org).

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