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High res images available upon request

Gibbes Museum of Art Announces Winner of the 2008 Factor Prize

Jeff Whetstone Receives the First Annual Elizabeth and Mallory Factor Prize for Southern Art

(Charleston, SC) – The Gibbes Museum of Art today announced that photographer Jeff Whetstone of Durham, North Carolina has won the 2008 Factor Prize for Southern Art and the \$10,000 cash prize that accompanies the award. This is the first year of the Factor Prize which acknowledges an artist whose work demonstrates the highest level of artistic achievement in any media while contributing to a new understanding of art in the South.

Artists who work in or who are from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee or Virginia were nominated for the 2008 Prize online at www.factorprize.org through February 10. Six panelists reviewed over two hundred and fifty applicants and narrowed the list to seven artists on March 10. The seven finalists were Jose Alvarez, Radcliffe Bailey, William Christenberry, Henri Schindler, Philip Simmons, Stacy-Lynn Waddell and Jeff Whetstone. At the museum's Annual Meeting on May 19, the Gibbes announced that Jeff Whetstone had won the Prize.

According to Todd Smith, former executive director of the Gibbes, "we chose Jeff Whetstone from among the seven short listed artists for his multivalent engagement with

the Southern experience in both the human and natural realms. In his *New Wilderness* series Jeff makes sense of that liminal space in our modern world between society and nature. The wilderness of the region that he seeks to portray is oddly familiar in its trappings yet eerily foreign in its presentation.

In his recent body of work, the *Post Pleistocene* series, Jeff Whetstone examines the marks that humans leave on the land and in particular the accreted marks left behind by generations of humans as they explored the caves of east Tennessee and Alabama. The building up of signs on the walls of these caves dates to the Civil War era and has continued into our times. This desire to leave a mark and to make the landscape our own is captured by Jeff's large-scale photographs.

Finally, it was Jeff's willingness to engage in the most quintessential of southern tropes, the male redneck, that sets him apart. For all of us southern men, the shadow that the redneck persona casts on our lived and imagined experiences is a real one, and Jeff is one of the few contemporary artists who seeks to celebrate, challenge and make sense of the stereotype in all of its complexity."

On the factorprize.org Web site, Whetstone noted, "I was raised in a rural setting. A duality charged the woods and fields of my native East Tennessee. I feared the wilderness and loved it. These conflicting attitudes developed the landscape as a character in my life, not merely a setting. It is the character of the land that has developed me."

Jeff Whetstone

Jeff Whetstone was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee and has been photographing and writing about the relationship between man and nature since he received a Zoology degree from Duke University in 1990. After receiving his MFA in photography from Yale in 2001, he was awarded the prestigious Sakier Prize for photography.

Jeff Whetstone's work has been exhibited at museums throughout the world. In 2006, his black and white photographs were included the Gibbes *Now!* exhibition. His photographs have received reviews in *The Village Voice*, *New York Times*, *New Yorker Magazine* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

Whetstone was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2007 for a body of work entitled, *New Wilderness*. On his application for the Guggenheim Fellowship, Whetstone noted, “I am a biologist at heart. When I look at a landscape I see an ecological system and when I look at a human I see an animal.”

Jeff Whetstone currently teaches at the Art Department of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

Elizabeth and Mallory Factor

Elizabeth and Mallory Factor, devoted collectors and patrons of the arts, established the Factor Prize to bring attention to southern artists. The Factors relocated to Charleston from New York City in 2006 and also maintain a family home in Gastonburg, Alabama. Elizabeth Factor, an attorney, was on the board of the Drawing Center and on the Whitney’s Photography Committee while in New York City. Mallory Factor, a merchant banker and consultant, serves on many corporate and not-for-profit boards including the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the American Theatre Wing and the TONY Awards Administration Committee.

Angela Mack, Executive Director of the Gibbes Museum of Art, acknowledges “through the vision and generosity of Elizabeth and Mallory Factor, the Gibbes will have a consistent voice in the Southern contemporary art scene. We are grateful to them for this opportunity to recognize high-quality art pertinent to this region.”

The 2009 Award

Nominations for the 2009 award have already started on the factorpize.org Web site. The Factor Prize Web site not only serves as a nomination point for artists but it is also an archive of information about Southern artists that can be used by curators, collectors, academicians and the public.

GIBBES MUSEUM OF ART

Established as the Carolina Art Association in 1858, the Gibbes Museum of Art opened its doors to the public in 1905. Located in Charleston's historic district, the Gibbes houses a premier collection of over 10,000 works, principally American with a Charleston or Southern connection and presents a series of special exhibitions annually. In addition, the museum offers an extensive complement of public programming and educational outreach initiatives. As the aesthetic heart of the Lowcountry, the Gibbes serves the community by stimulating creative expression, increasing economic vitality through tourism, and improving the region's superb quality of life.

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