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Rock My Soul
Exhibition at Mt. Vernon Library
 Celebrates the Black Legacy of Rock and Roll

(April 26, 2007, White Plains, N.Y.) On the evening of April 24, representatives from the Westchester Arts Council and the Mount Vernon community gathered in the Rotunda of the Mount Vernon Library to celebrate the opening of Rock My Soul: the Black Legacy of Rock and Roll. This exhibition of large scale paintings and drawings includes works by ten African-American artists, each inspired by African and African-American musical genres. Rock My Soul, on loan from Cleveland, Ohio's Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, was commissioned by The Arts League of Michigan, and has been brought to Mount Vernon under the auspices of the Triple Hill Music Festival. The exhibition will remain on view in the Rotunda until June 29; it is open to the public during regular library hours: Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday-Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The Mount Vernon Public Library is located at 28 First Avenue in Mount Vernon. For more information please call 914-428-2440 x236.

Rock My Soul: the Black Legacy of Rock & Roll was conceived in 2003 as collaboration between the Detroit-based Arts League of Michigan and Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum and Museum. They envisioned a visual arts exhibition that would tell the story of the African roots of rock and roll and the ongoing influence of Black culture on the music of today. Through a juried competition ten artist were selected to turn sound into image, and create works inspired by nine genres of music, each representing a different branch of the rock and roll family tree. The paintings and drawings in the exhibition capture the essence of the music of West Africa, slavery work songs, spirituals, blues, jazz, gospel, R&B, soul, funk, and hip hop, and celebrate the spirit of the people who created it.

The dramatic visuals are accompanied by text panels that bring context to the imagery, telling the story of the music that laid the foundations for rock and roll. An accompanying curriculum guide will be distributed to schools ensuring that the exhibition achieves its goal of promoting greater understanding of and pride in the African-America contributions to the music that has become the soundtrack of our times.

Further rounding out the experience, a series of free community arts workshops are scheduled for Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons through the end of June. The workshops will be conducted by teaching artists from the Westchester Arts Council's Artist Roster on a wide range of topics relating to the exhibition, such as African dance, slam poetry and painting to the sounds of jazz. A complete schedule can be viewed at www.westarts.com.

Since its inception in 2003, the exhibition has traveled to locations throughout the Midwest, and is now being seen on the East Coast for the first time. Rock My Soul comes to Mount Vernon as part of the Triple Hill Music Festival, a music education and community arts program that celebrates the contributions of African-Americans to the development of rock & roll. Running from April through July of 2007, the Triple Hill Music Festival will build upon the rich musical history of Mount Vernon and the natural affinity of youth for music to inspire the next generation of musicians. Over thirty instructional workshops, master classes and performances of gospel, R&B, jazz, Brazilian, folk, and blues music will take place through programming in the schools and a series of free public performances. The Rock My Soul exhibition anchors and gives focus to the festival events, and will be visited by school and community groups through the duration of the festival.

The **Triple Hill Music Festival** is a project of the Westchester Arts Council in collaboration with Mayor Ernest Davis, the City of Mount Vernon, Mt. Vernon Public Library, Mt. Vernon City School District, Mt. Vernon Parent & Community Forum on Education, Fleetwood Neighborhood Association, and the Boys & Girls Club of Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon resident Donna Jackson, Creative Director for the festival, was instrumental in its conception and development. Financial support comes from the New York State Music Fund, established by the New York State Attorney General at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors; last fall the Westchester Arts Council was granted \$115,000.00 from this fund to support the Triple Hill Music Festival. The national tour of the Rock My Soul exhibition is made possible thanks to a generous grant from the Ford Motor Company.

"We welcome the opportunity contribute to the Festival by hosting the 'Rock My Soul' exhibition in the Mount Vernon Library," says acting Library Director Opal Brown Lindsay. "Residents of Mt. Vernon will see their own rich musical history mirrored in these paintings celebrating the roots of rock & roll and will have an opportunity to explore the arts further through the supplemental programming scheduled at the library."

"This exhibition is a perfect example of the way the arts can be used to inspire and to teach," says Janet Langsam, Executive Director

of The Westchester Arts Council, "These works are not only exciting to view, they engage us in the story they tell and broaden our understanding."

Westchester Arts Council, founded in 1965, is the largest, private, not-for-profit arts council in New York State. Its mission is to provide leadership, vision, and support, to ensure the availability, accessibility, and diversity of the arts. In 1998, the Arts Council purchased 31 Mamaroneck Avenue in White Plains, now known as the Arts Exchange, and has since developed the building as a multi-use resource for artists, cultural organizations, and the community.

Images, artist bios and artist statements available upon request.

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