FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STORIES COME TO LIFE IN DUE SOUTH: KE FRANCIS AND HOOPSNAKE PRESS AT THE MONTGOMERY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

A new exhibition on view this fall explores the power of storytelling through prints and artist books.

Montgomery, AL, December 6, 2022 – Ke Francis (American, born 1945) is an expert storyteller. He creates tall tales, fables, and new mythologies filled with an original band of characters and symbols that speak to the personal and the universal, his southern heritage and world travels, and the power of nature and humanity. With his signature sense of humor, Francis’ vibrant and exuberant visual narratives address a wide range of experiences from the ordinary to the sublime, including disasters and rebuilding, strength, and resiliency.

Divided into two parts, the first section of Due South highlights works of art by Francis from the Museum’s Permanent Collection—including several recent acquisitions—that include his human and animal figures persevering and overcoming stressful situations. The exhibition’s second section features a selection of his extraordinary artist books, a medium he has worked in since 1985 when he decided to devote more time to short stories and poetry. By focusing on storytelling and artist books, the artist found that his work in other mediums, including painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture, became more poetic and narrative. Francis created all of his prints and artist books at Hoopsnake Press, a printing press the artist founded in 1970, which continues to thrive in Tupelo, Mississippi, today.
Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Curator Jennifer Jankauskas states, “Ke is a master of his craft, from printmaking to painting, bookmaking to sculpture. His visionary works stir our imagination and connect with our emotions. The MMFA is delighted to work with Ke, once again, to share his powerful stories.”

Angie Dodson, director at the MMFA, says, “Over the years, the MMFA’s path has crossed with Ke’s time and again—looking back, it’s really lovely to reflect on our intertwined lives—how he has helped us become us and, hopefully, how we have been able to support him on his journey. Along with his creative works, his generosity and the depth of our relationship will certainly be on view in the galleries and will also come through in the exhibition-related programming. We encourage everyone to experience the many facets of Due South.”

MMFA Board President Laurie J. Weil, D.V.M. says, “It is exciting to have another exhibition by Ke Francis at the MMFA, which has his work in its Permanent Collection. I’m thrilled by Museum members’ opportunity to meet with the artist. In addition, high school students will be able to participate in a printmaking class with the artist. With Ke’s work in major museums across the country and the world, Due South offers observation of Ke’s use of multiple art media to delight and educate everyone who sees the exhibition.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST
Ke Francis attended Mississippi State University, The University of Memphis, Memphis College of Art, and the Cleveland Art Institute in Cleveland, Ohio, where he graduated in 1967 with a B.F.A. in Sculpture. Francis stayed on at the Cleveland Art Institute, teaching sculpture from 1967 until 1970. At that time, he returned to his hometown of Tupelo, Mississippi, to open Francis Studios and start Hoopsnake Press, where he worked in various media, including painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture. During the course of his career, Mr. Francis has taught workshops and seminars in Belgium, Germany, and at Penland School, Arrowmont, Oxbow, and Haystack School in the U.S. and served as a printmaking instructor at the Edinburgh College of Art in Scotland. In 1996, he became Director of Flying Horse Editions, a fine art press at the University of Central Florida. Promoted to a professor, Francis became chair of the art department and served as dean of research for the College of Arts and Humanities until his retirement in 2014, when he returned to Tupelo to continue his artistic pursuits.

Francis has exhibited nationally and internationally, and his work is in the permanent collections of institutions such as The Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; High Museum, Atlanta,
Georgia; New Orleans Museum of Fine Art, Louisiana; San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art, California; and the Ginsburg Collection in Johannesburg, South Africa among many others. Additionally, he has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Southern Arts Federation, the Mississippi Arts Commission, and was a Fellow of the Bellagio Study Center, Bellagio, Italy, through the Rockefeller Foundation. Francis was also the recipient of the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Award.

RELATED PROGRAMS

Coffee with the Curator and Ke Francis
Thursday, December 8, 2022; 8:30–9:45 AM
Members Only
Museum members are invited to enjoy coffee and a light breakfast, followed by a gallery talk led by MMFA curator Jennifer Jankauskas and artist Ke Francis.

Printmaking with Ke Francis for High School Students
Friday, December 9, 2022; 9 AM to Noon
$15 per person | Limited to 15 students; Register at mmfa.org
Students are invited to learn relief printmaking techniques from renowned artist Ke Francis.

MUSEUM SHOP
Original works and prints by Ke Francis are available for purchase in the Museum Shop through March 2023.

SUPPORT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Annual support for exhibitions was made possible by the following sponsors and grantors. Lead sponsors Alabama State Council on the Arts, Alabama Power Foundation, ArtBridges, Lamar, Medical Properties Trust, Inc., MGMWERX, Regions Bank, and Rheem Manufacturing, with additional support from sponsors PowerSouth and Laurie J. Weil, D.V.M. and Dr. Tommy Wool, and co-sponsors AmeriFirst Bank, Balch & Bingham, LLP, Barganier Davis Williams Architects Associated, AlA, Captrust, Mr. and Mrs. Marvin H. Campbell II, Ms. Camille Elebash-Hill, Mr. and Mrs. L. Daniel Morris, Jr., Dr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Newman, Jr., River Bank & Trust, Russell Construction of Alabama, Inc., Ms. Micki Beth Stiller, Valley Bank, and Warren Averett, LLC.

ABOUT THE MMFA
The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1930 by a group of local artists as a place for both exhibiting art and a space for art education. The original intentions of the founders—to exhibit and teach—continue to inspire and inform every action and activity at the Museum. Since 1988, the MMFA has shared the 175-acre Blount Cultural Park with partners across the lake at the celebrated Alabama Shakespeare Festival.
Today’s MMFA visitors stroll through art-studded grounds and permanent collection galleries. They see compelling changing exhibitions and learn about art by playing in the interactive gallery, ArtWorks; making art in the bustling studios, and by participating in other engaging events and programs. In addition, MMFA visitors can relax and recharge in the serenity of the Museum’s stunning three-acre John and Joyce Caddell Sculpture Garden.

While the Museum’s collection is still home to the art of many of the regional artists who first established it, over time, it has become known for its strengths in American art and Old Master prints. Recent, important acquisitions of art made by African American and Asian American artists and works inspired by images and themes related to the experiences of these groups represent the breadth and depth of the lives and concerns of those who call Montgomery and the River Region home. Through the exhibition of these works and the programs and events that help connect our communities with it, the MMFA has become recognized as a leading arts and cultural resource here in the state and Southeastern region.

The MMFA is a department of the City of Montgomery and is supported by funds from the City of Montgomery, with additional funds from the Montgomery County Commission and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Association. Programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

GENERAL INFORMATION

WHAT: Due South: Ke Francis and Hoopsnake Press

WHEN: December 2, 2022 through February 19, 2023

WHERE: Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts
Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park
One Museum Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

INFORMATION: mmfa.org
334.625.4333
@MontgomeryMFA

HOURS:
Galleries, ArtWorks, Sculpture Garden, Terrace, and Store: Mondays, Closed
Tuesdays–Sunday, 10 AM–5 PM
Last entry at 4:45 PM

ADMISSION: Free! With ample, free parking.

###

MEDIA CONTACT
Stephen Hayes: shayes@mmfa.org | 334.625.4347