Preface to *The Black Family*

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*The Black Family* is a topic of special interest to the artists who have lived through the experiences offered in such families as well as to a wider audience. Many twentieth-century American artists have chosen this subject as a major theme in their work as the exhibition suggests. The art in this exhibition covers a period of major change in American Society from the 1930s to the present. These artists add a visual note to the discourse on the Black family that is generally aired in sociology or other academic disciplines.

This exhibition has been curated by an artist, Evelyn Patricia Terry, and an art historian, Leonard Simon, both of whom also were raised in African-American families. Their essays represent two different approaches to the topic. Terry argues that the issues relating to the black family are essentially no different from those affecting any American family. By contrast, Simon focuses on distinctive features of the black family experience as portrayed by a selection of African-American artists. Terry's choice of art is all contemporary, while Simon has selected art from earlier in the century. In both instances, the work is in a variety of styles common to American artists of the times.

This exhibition is part of a larger commitment of the Haggerty Museum to explore the work of multicultural artists and the issues that their art raises. It is a curatorial experiment involving guest curators from the local arts community and the national academic community in cooperation with the Museum staff. Terry received the M.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is a professional artist in the Milwaukee community. Simon received the Ph.D. in art history from Stanford University, and is an art historian at the University of California-Riverside. They have worked as guest curators in cooperation with Johann J. K. Reusch, curator at the Haggerty Museum of Art. Their efforts have resulted in a thought-provoking exhibition, *The Black Family*, that is informative of the creative efforts of a representative selection of notable African-American artists.

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