FIRST PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF FLANNERY O'CONNOR LETTERS OPENS SEPT. 22

The first public exhibition of correspondence from Georgia-born author Flannery O’Connor to Atlantan Betty Hester opens Sept. 22 at Emory University’s Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (MARBL).

“‘Dear Miss Hester’: Letters from Flannery O’Connor to Betty Hester, 1955-1964,” draws from a collection of more than 250 letters written to Hester during that time period. Amplifying letters and manuscripts from the collection will be photographs, books and other memorabilia from MARBL’s collections that help tell the story of O’Connor’s life and art, as well as her friendship with Hester, says MARBL Director Steve Enniss.

“The main focus of the exhibit is Flannery O’Connor’s correspondence with Hester, in whom she confided more than she did other correspondents,” Enniss said. “We selected letters that illustrate the larger social, cultural, literary and historical context of O’Connor’s life.”

Hester, who wrote unpublished stories, poems and philosophical essays, worked for Retail Credit Co. in Atlanta (now Equifax). She gave O’Connor’s letters to Emory University’s Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library in 1987, with the understanding that they would remain sealed for 20 years. The collection was opened for research use for the first time in May 2007.

The materials donated by Hester include not only letters she received from O’Connor two or three times a month, but O’Connor manuscripts and a short story by Hester that O’Connor critiqued, as well. The entire collection sheds light on O’Connor’s faith, her unusual imagination, and her homebound life on her mother’s rural Georgia farm.

A two-day celebration to mark the exhibition’s debut is planned on the Emory University campus Sept. 25 and 26. “‘The Prophet’s Country’: A Celebration of the Life and Work of Flannery O’Connor” includes a reading of the letters; a day of panel discussions of O’Connor’s life and work; an exhibition of photographs of Andalusia, the farm where O’Connor lived with her mother; and a film screening of “Wise Blood,” based on the O’Connor novel of the same name (schedule attached).

For more information, visit http://web.library.emory.edu/inquiry/oconnor/ or call 404.727.7620.

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The Emory University Libraries in Atlanta and Oxford, Ga., are dedicated to fostering courageous inquiry among students and scholars at Emory University and around the world. The nine libraries’ holdings include more than 3.1 million print and electronic volumes, 40,000-plus electronic journals, and internationally renowned special collections. Visit the libraries online at http://web.library.emory.edu/.
“‘The Prophet’s Country’: A Celebration of the Life and Work of Flannery O’Connor”

Tuesday, Sept. 25-Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2007

*Sponsored by the Emory University Libraries; the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library; the Aquinas Center; Emory University’s Visual Arts Program; and the Georgia Center for the Book.*

**Tuesday, Sept. 25, 2007**

6:00-7:00  A Reading of the letters from Flannery O’Connor to Betty Hester

**Brenda Bynum**

With a biographical introduction by Bill Sessions

Emerson Concert Hall, Schwartz Center for Performing Arts

**Wednesday, Sept. 26, 2007**

10:30-11:30  KEYNOTE

11:30-1:00  Lunch (on your own)

1:00-2:30  PANEL ONE: “Life and Vision”

Moderated by **Steve Enniss**, Director, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library

Jones Room, Level 3, Woodruff Library

“Flannery O’Connor and Conservatism: The Russell Kirk Connection,”

**Hank Edmondson**, Professor, Government and Sociology, Georgia College and State University

(-more-)
“The Life You Save May Be Your Own,”
Paul Elie, Senior Editor, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

“Betty Hester’s Parody of the Lord’s Prayer: ‘Androgyny’”
Bill Sessions, Regents’ Professor of Literature Emeritus, Georgia State University

2:30-2:45 Break

2:45-4:15 PANEL TWO: Contexts and Convergences
Moderated by Pam Hall, Associate Professor, Religion and Women’s Studies, Emory University
Jones Room, Level 3, Woodruff Library

“A Good Woman is Never Hard to Find”
Jim Grimsley, Senior Writer in Residence, Emory University

“Imaginary Orphan, Imaginary Home: Displacement in the Writings of Flannery O’Connor and Salman Rushdie”
Rosemary Magee, Vice President and Secretary of the University, Emory University

“Beyond the Peacock and the Unpainted Shack: Flannery O’Connor, Alice Walker and the Southern Landscape”
Nagueyalti Warren, Senior Lecturer, African American Studies, Emory University

4:15-4:45 Break

4:45-5:45 “Uncomfortable Influences”
Introduction by Sally Wolff-King, Associate Dean of Emory College, Emory University
Lynna Williams, Associate Professor, Creative Writing, Emory University
With musical performance by Cynthia and Richard Patterson
Visual Arts Gallery, 700 Peavine Creek Drive

6:15-7:15 Exhibition Opening and Reception
“Andalusia”: Photographs by Nancy Marshall
Introduction by Bill Brown, Faculty, Visual Arts Program, Emory College
Visual Arts Gallery, 700 Peavine Creek Drive

(-more-)
7:30 Film screening of *Wise Blood* (running time 108 min.)
Introduction by Matthew Bernstein, Associate Professor, Film Studies, Emory University
Location: White Hall 206

**Ongoing activities:**

**Sept. 22—Dec. 28, 2007**
“*Dear Miss Hester*”: the Flannery O’Connor Letters, 1955-1964
Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Level 10, Woodruff Library
For more information: 404.727.6887

**Sept. 25 — Oct. 30, 2007**
“*Andalusia*”: Photographs by Nancy Marshall
Visual Arts Gallery, 700 Peavine Creek Drive
For more information: 404.727.6315

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