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***THOUGHTS ON DEMOCRACY* EXHIBITION DEBUTS JULY 5, 2008 AT THE WOLFSONIAN–FIU
60 Contemporary Artists and Designers Offer Interpretations of Norman Rockwell’s
Iconic “Four Freedoms” Posters**

MIAMI BEACH, FL (May 29, 2008)—The Wolfsonian–Florida International University announces *Thoughts on Democracy*, an innovative initiative that brings together 60 renowned contemporary artists and designers to present original works inspired by Norman Rockwell’s “Four Freedoms” posters. *Thoughts on Democracy* is part of *CELEBRATING AMERICA*, a series of four exhibitions on view in 2008 and 2009, that examine and celebrate the social, political, and personal American experience from the 1930s to the present.

In keeping with its theme, *Thoughts on Democracy* is free and open to the public in the museum’s lobby beginning July 5 through December 7, 2008. The exhibition will culminate with an event celebrating democracy during the prestigious 2008 Art Basel Miami Beach festival. In conjunction with the show, The Wolfsonian is also producing limited-edition portfolios of the new works (available in September), with all proceeds benefiting the graphic arts acquisitions and curatorial and educational programs. A poster that compiles all four of Rockwell’s “Four Freedoms” images is on view in The Wolfsonian’s permanent collection gallery.

“We invited artists and designers to participate in a ‘graphic remix’ that would reinterpret Rockwell’s posters in today’s visual language,” said Wolfsonian art director Tim Hossler, who conceived the project and is co-curating the show with Steven Heller, co-chair of the MFA Design Department at the School of Visual Arts. “We are thrilled with the response and are eager to see how the participants’ exploration of democracy stimulates public conversation on the subject.”

Rockwell’s “Four Freedoms” paintings were first published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1943, and were later issued by the government as posters for a U.S. war bond drive. The paintings illustrated the ideals expressed in Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s impassioned “Four Freedoms” speech to Congress in 1941, in which he envisioned a “world founded upon four essential human freedoms”—Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want, and Freedom from Fear.

"We are always looking for new, provocative ways to foster dialogue around our collection in relation to contemporary issues, particularly when we are able to involve contemporary artists and graphic designers," said The Wolfsonian's director, Cathy Leff. "*Thoughts on Democracy* will be a fascinating and timely reflection of how Roosevelt's universal ideals, articulated in 1941, are interpreted and expressed in 2008." She explained that The Wolfsonian's impetus for the project was a recent gift of the "Four Freedoms" posters to the museum by Leonard A. Lauder.

The public will also be able to enjoy and contemplate the new works beyond the museum walls. The Wolfsonian, in partnership with the award-winning international advertising agency Crispin Porter + Bogusky, also playing a role as exhibitor, will display the posters in newspapers and on billboards. The Wolfsonian will also offer public educational programming in conjunction with the exhibit and promote dialogue about the show on the internet using web-based tools (Flickr, iGoogle gadgets), a *Thoughts on Democracy* blog (<http://thoughtsondemocracy.blogspot.com>), virtual worlds, and social networking sites (The Wolfsonian Facebook page).

In keeping with the spirit of expanding *Thoughts on Democracy* into the greater public domain, The Wolfsonian will also partner with Turnberry for the Arts to present a concurrent exhibition of the posters in the Aventura Mall (www.aventuramall.com), 19501 Biscayne Boulevard, beginning July 5 through August 2008. "Turnberry for the Arts is delighted to have the opportunity to share the artworks in this exciting and timely exhibition with visitors at Aventura Mall. The *Thoughts on Democracy* project is a wonderful complement to the works by contemporary artists that are permanently on display at the mall. Two of the artists - Lawrence Weiner, whose installation is currently on view here, and Daniel Arsham, whose installation will be unveiled at the mall this fall, are also featured in The Wolfsonian's exhibition," noted Jacqueline Fletcher, director of the Turnberry for the Arts program.

All artists and designers included in the exhibition have generously donated their time and creativity. *Thoughts on Democracy* is supported by a generous grant from the Funding Arts Network (FAN), in partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The Wolfsonian is the only recipient of FAN's Knight New Work Award for 2008; the \$50,000 grant was awarded to the museum in May 2008. "The ambitious scale of *Thoughts on Democracy* and its resonating message of democracy made this project irresistibly compelling," said Rachel Blechman, president of FAN. Additional support for *Thoughts on Democracy* is provided by Turnberry for the Arts exhibited at the Aventura Mall.

About the artists

As illustrated by the quantity and quality of the posters that will be on display, the idea behind *Thoughts on Democracy* was received with an outpouring of enthusiasm by the participants. Local, national, and international visual artists, graphic designers, and one poet contributed works to the project. A brief biography of select artists from the exhibition, and a statement about their poster follows below:

Elliott Earls is a performance artist, musician, and designer, and is designer-in-residence and head of the Graduate Graphic Design Department at Cranbrook Academy of Art. Earls has lectured extensively at American universities, and has given workshops on design, culture and new media in Europe and America.

Artist's Statement: Entitled "Liberty Weeps," Elliott Earls' contribution to The Wolfsonian's *Thoughts on Democracy* poster project was inspired by Eugene Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People." In this piece, Liberty is embodied in the innocence of a crying child. Is Liberty crying for the victims of September 11th? Is Liberty crying over the loss of civil liberties in the War on Terror? Is Liberty crying for our fallen soldiers in Iraq or for the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay? The open nature of the language in this poster contrasted with the specificity of the image is meant to provoke discussion.

Experimental Jetset is an Amsterdam graphic design unit founded in 1997 by Marieke Stolk, Erwin Brinkers and Danny van den Dungen. Focusing on printed matter and installation work, Experimental Jetset has worked on projects for the Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum (SMCS), Purple Institute, Centre Pompidou, Colette, Dutch Post Group (TPG), Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN), Le Cent Quatre (104), De Theatercompagnie, and t-shirt label 2K/Gingham.

Artist's Statement: The slogan "Loose Lips Build Ships" is a collision of two iconic WWII posters: the "Freedom of Speech" poster as painted by Rockwell, and the "Loose Lips Sink Ships" poster, the US Office of War Information's attempt to limit the possibility of people inadvertently giving useful information to enemy spies.

On the one hand, our contribution is a tribute to the concept of freedom of speech: the idea that all constructive things start with an open exchange of ideas. On the other hand, we wanted to show our uneasiness with the concept of propaganda. Acknowledging freedom of speech by turning a propaganda slogan on its head is our attempt to create a little bit of friction, or better said, to reveal a friction that is already there.

Chip Kidd is a graphic designer and writer based in New York City. His book jacket designs for Alfred A. Knopf, where he has worked since 1986, have helped spawn a revolution in the art of American book packaging. He is the recipient of the 2007 National Design Award for Communications.

Artist's Statement: I really, really struggled with this one. I was torn between pursuing two different concepts: first, the lack of these freedoms in other countries; second, a caution about the abuse of these freedoms in the US. I ultimately went with the latter. The point is that every day we see how these freedoms can not only be taken for granted, but that they can be twisted to harmful ends by the very people they are meant to serve. Thus Freedom from Want leads to rampant obesity; Freedom of Worship leads to using God to hate; Freedom of Speech leads to destruction of property; and Freedom from Fear leads to the proliferation and deadly use of guns.

Taku Satoh is a Tokyo-based graphic and product designer, and the director of 21_21 DESIGN SIGHT in Tokyo. He attended Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music for both undergraduate and graduate school and then joined the firm Dentsu, before establishing the Taku Satoh Design Office in 1984.

Artist's Statement: Inspired by the four posters of freedoms drawn by Normal Rockwell, I have added the most important kind of freedom for the present time. That is "Freedom to Imagine." Nothing should prevent imagination. Imagination creates the future. Imagination cultivates technology.

Imagination saves the environment. Imagination protects human rights.
Imagination prevents battles. Imagination creates art.
Everything begins with imagination.
Of course it is imagination for coexistence of different cultures, not a selfish imagination.

Scott Stowell is the proprietor of Open, an independent design studio that creates rewarding experiences for people that look, read, and think. Before starting Open, Stowell received a BFA in graphic design from Rhode Island School of Design and served as the art director of *Colors* magazine in Rome and a senior designer at M&Co. New York. A former vice president of AIGA/NY, Stowell teaches at Yale and the School of Visual Arts.

Artist's Statement: This poster uses words – from FDR's speech and Rockwell's posters – distilled into calls to action that are still relevant and urgent today. The typography was inspired both by traditional "show print" posters and the I AM A MAN signs from Martin Luther King's 1968 march in Memphis. Two of these calls to action are usually heard from the left. They appear in blue. The other two, more often heard from the right, are in red.

Lawrence Weiner is a central figure in the history of conceptual art, whose work often takes the form of typographic texts. The first presentation of his work was in Mill Valley, California in 1960. He participates in public and private projects and exhibitions in both the new and old world maintaining that: art is the empirical fact of the relationships of objects to objects in relation to human beings and not dependent upon historical precedent for either use or legitimacy.

Artist's Statement:
LIFE • LIBERTY • & • THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS
N'EST-CE-PAS?

About The Wolfsonian—Florida International University

The Wolfsonian is a museum, library, and research center that uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design, to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, historical, and technological changes that have transformed our world. The collections comprise approximately 120,000 objects from the period of 1885 to 1945—the height of the Industrial Revolution to the end of the Second World War—in a variety of media including furniture; industrial-design objects; works in glass, ceramics, and metal; rare books; periodicals; ephemera; works on paper; paintings; textiles; and medals.

The Wolfsonian is located at 1001 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, Fla. Admission is \$7 adults; \$5 seniors, students, and children six-12; free for Wolfsonian members, State University System of Florida staff and students with ID, children under six, and Miami Beach residents with ID. The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday from noon-6pm; Thursday and Friday from noon-9pm; and is closed on Wednesday. Contact us at 305.531.1001 or visit us online at www.wolfsonian.org.

The Wolfsonian receives ongoing support from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs; the Florida Arts Council; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council; the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; the City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council; the Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams Foundation; the William J. & Tina Rosenberg Foundation; Continental Airlines, the preferred airline of The Wolfsonian; Crispin Porter + Bogusky; The Miami Herald; Bacardi U.S.A., Inc; Robert Mondavi Winery; and Pistils & Petals.