



## **\$10 Million Center And Museum “A Dream Come True” For Hollins**

Roanoke, Va. – Hollins University officially dedicated the Richard Wetherill Visual Arts Center and Eleanor D. Wilson Museum on October 16, the culmination of more than five years of planning and construction.

“The center and museum are a dream come true for generations of art students, distinguished faculty who have elevated Hollins’ art programs to national stature, and to a woman whose generosity and vision made it all possible,” said Wayne Markert, the university’s acting president.

Eleanor Delaney “Siddy” Wilson graduated from Hollins in 1930 and went on to achieve renown as a stage and film actress and as an artist. In 1999, she gave her alma mater nearly \$3 million to build a comprehensive visual arts facility to be named for her grandfather, Richard Wetherill, a Pennsylvania industrialist who greatly influenced her life. After her death in 2002, Wilson through her estate left Hollins another \$6.5 million to create and endow the Eleanor D. Wilson Museum.

“Siddy wanted desperately for Hollins to have an art facility where students and the public could view and study works of art and where a permanent art collection could grow and flourish,” said Markert. “She worked doggedly to make it happen.”

Hollins broke ground on construction of the visual arts center in August 2002 and the facility was completed for the beginning of the 2004-2005 academic year on September 1.

The \$10 million visual arts center brings studio art, art history, film and photography, and a museum all together for the first time in one place at Hollins. The Wilson Museum is the facility’s centerpiece and has been named a Museum Partner by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, a designation that will help bring world-class exhibitions and other arts programming to the university.

“Contemporary Art: Two Visions,” an exhibition featuring photographs by Sally Mann and paintings by Janet Fish, is being showcased during the dedication along with works by Hollins students and faculty. Mann, who received both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Hollins, was named “America’s Best Photographer” by *Time* magazine in 2001. Her work appears in the permanent collections of major international museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art.

Fish was one of the first women artists to receive her M.F.A. from Yale University in 1963. Her works are in many major collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, and her paintings have been featured in museums in New York, Tokyo, and Washington, D.C.

The Richard Wetherill Visual Arts Center is a working facility as evidenced by its industrial aesthetic: concrete floors, unpainted concrete columns and an exposed ventilation system are among the features that give the center a look and design similar to a factory. The building also features a plein aire (“open air”) studio, which offers a large outdoor deck where art students can work.

The center has already caught the eye of at least one major university. Officials from Virginia Tech are planning a visit to see the facility’s design in anticipation of building a project of their own for the arts on their campus.

Hollins is an independent liberal arts university offering undergraduate education for women, selected graduate programs for men and women, and community outreach initiatives. Founded in 1842 as Virginia’s first chartered women’s college, Hollins has long had a reputation for strength and innovation in the arts with its faculty of recognized artists, scholars, and dedicated teachers. For more information, go to [www.hollins.edu](http://www.hollins.edu).

###

Press Contact: Jeff Hodges, director of media relations

(540) 362-6503

[jhodges@hollins.edu](mailto:jhodges@hollins.edu)

October 16, 2004

