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Visual Griots of Mali Opens Dec. 19 at the Fowler Museum at UCLA

(griot n.- a storyteller in West Africa who perpetuates the oral traditions of a family or village)

In January 2005, the Visual Griots workshop engaged twenty-two sixth graders from Mali in an exploration of the power of photography. A team of Malian and U.S. photographers guided the students through camera basics, then the students put to work their newfound skills to honor the people and traditions of their community. Forty-nine photographs from the project will be on display at the Fowler Museum at UCLA from December 19, 2007 to March 9, 2008 in the exhibition "Visual Griots of Mali." These arresting black-and-white images reveal these young people's perspectives on their rural West African lives.

The young photographers whose work appears in this exhibition live in two small villages 500 miles southwest of Timbuktu, Dany and Kouara. Taking inspiration from the role of the griot (gree-oh), a traditional West African storyteller who carries on a family's or village's oral traditions, the students' portray the day-to-day delights and duties of community life. Images of people caring for animals, going to school, and tending to family chores take on an intimate tone as the photographer's first-person captions reveal their close relationships to the subjects and activities.

The Visual Griots workshop and this exhibition are projects of the Academy for Educational Development (www.aed.org), founded in 1961, a nonprofit organization working on major areas of human development, with a focus on improving education, health, and economic opportunities for the least advantaged in the United States and developing countries throughout the world. The Los Angeles presentation is made possible by Barbara and Joe Goldenberg.

"Visual Griots of Mali" will be on view in the Fowler Museum's Goldenberg Galleria. The Fowler is open Wednesdays through Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m.; and on Thursdays, from noon until 8 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA Arts, is located in the north part of the UCLA campus. Admission is free. Parking is available for a maximum of \$8 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call 310/825-4361 or visit fowler.ucla.edu.

Related Programs:

Sun., Jan. 13, 2008 2:30 pm

Griots in the Gallery: Aztec Stories

Experience the world of the Mexica/Aztecs through poetry, oral tradition stories, and ballads. Storyteller Michael Heraldal shares the history, language, foods, and arts from an indigenous perspective. His performance is enhanced by traditional instruments made by hand, including Mayan Bubalek Gourd Water Drums and numerous flutes, shakers, and rattles, offering plenty of opportunities for audience participation.

Sun., Feb. 10, 2008 2 pm

Visual Griots of Mali—African Children Tell Their Stories with Cameras**Fowler Outspoken Lecture**

Shawn Davis of the Academy for Educational Development (AED) unveils the story behind the photographs featured in “Visual Griots of Mali” and the impact of the project on the related Malian communities.

Sun., Feb. 10, 2008 2:30 pm

Griots in the Gallery: Michael McCarty

Join griot Michael D. McCarty to hear tales of Ananse the Spider, the well-known trickster character from West Africa. This is the second program in the Fowler's winter storytelling series offered in conjunction with “Visual Griots of Mali.”

Sun., Mar. 9, 2008 2:30 pm

Griots in the Gallery: Puppetry Against AIDS

The last installment of the Sunday storytelling series, this touching puppet performance addresses the discrimination faced by people who are affected and infected with HIV/AIDS. Developed especially with elementary school audiences in mind, this program offers honest, accurate information that is age-appropriate. Presented in conjunction with both “Visual Griots of Mali” and “Make Art/Stop AIDS.”