

For Immediate Release

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CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER BRINGS DEATH TO LIFE IN UNPRECEDENTED NEW EXHIBITION MORBID CURIOSITY: THE RICHARD HARRIS COLLECTION JANUARY 28 – JULY 8, 2012

***Exhibit Explores the Iconography of Death, Showcases Nearly 1,000 Works From
Richard Harris' Collection – by Rembrandt, Mapplethorpe, Dürer, Goya,
Jasper Johns and Many Other Notable Artists***

CHICAGO (November 2, 2011) – A deadly obsession takes hold of the Chicago Cultural Center this winter when one of its largest exhibitions to date, ***Morbid Curiosity: The Richard Harris Collection***, opens Saturday, January 28, 2012. Presented by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events in partnership with the Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture, *Morbid Curiosity: The Richard Harris Collection* showcases the wild and wonderfully eclectic selection of nearly 1,000 works of fine art, artifacts, massive installations and decorative objects, including creations by many of the greatest artists of our time, that explore the iconography of death across a variety of artistic, cultural and spiritual practices from 2000 B.C.E. to the present day.

Richard Harris, a resident of Riverwoods, Ill. who has been an art collector for 40 years, has gathered his provocative collection from all corners of the world to share with Chicago. *Morbid Curiosity* will fill two exhibition spaces, the 4th floor Exhibit Hall and Sidney R. Yates Gallery, at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., and will run through Sunday, July 8, 2012. The public is invited to an opening reception on Friday, January 27 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

"We are all born to die. The questions that fascinate me are how we will die, where will we die and when will we die," said Richard Harris. "At the age of 74, I believe it is incumbent upon me to make my collection a paean to death in all its many visages."

The two major components of this exhibition are the "**War Room**," highlighting the atrocities of war in notable works from the 17th century to present day in the 4th floor Exhibit Hall; and the "**Kunstkammer of Death**," a modern-day "cabinet of curiosities" housed in the Sidney R. Yates Gallery, featuring a wide-ranging survey of mortality across cultures and spiritual traditions.

The centerpiece of the "War Room" is Mr. Harris' rare collection of **five great war series**, featuring prints by **Jacques Callot**, **Francisco Goya**, **Otto Dix**, the **Chapman Brothers** and **Sandow Birk**, which he has acquired over the past 30 years. This exhibition marks the first time that all five series will be exhibited together in their entirety.

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City of Chicago
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor
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"The scope, quality and diversity of Mr. Harris' collection is unprecedented," said Michelle T. Boone, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. "*Morbid Curiosity* will fill two gallery spaces on the 4th floor to cover a total of 14,000 sq. ft. during its six-month run, making it one of our largest and longest-running exhibitions to date."

"We look forward to hosting an exciting array of music, theater and art programming in conjunction with the exhibition, further engaging the public in a conversation about difficult themes that continue to fascinate humankind," added Commissioner Boone.

"War Room"

Mr. Harris presents his rare collection of five great war series, arguably the most remarkable interpretations of war in art, evoking the ongoing cycle of human cruelty and destruction over centuries. Chronologically, the first of the series features **Jacques Callot's** 17th century *Miseries of War* prints, followed by **Francisco Goya's** extraordinary 18th century *Disasters of War*. The two masterpieces of the 20th century include **Otto Dix's** *Der Kreig* and **Jake and Dinos Chapman's** *Disasters of War*, both of which are heavily influenced by Goya. Completing the series is the 21st century *The Depravities of War* by **Sadow Birk** featuring massive woodblock prints depicting the Iraq war.

"Kunstkammer of Death"

The Italianate Sidney R. Yates Gallery will have its own distinct flavor within the exhibition as it is transformed into the style of a 17th century "Kunstkammer of Death." ("Kunstkammer" is the precursor of the Public Museum as we know of them today. One of the greatest examples of a Kunstkammer was established by Peter the Great in Russia in 1727. Peter's museum was a "**cabinet of curiosities**" dedicated to preserving natural and human curiosities and artistic rarities from across the globe as a means of acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of the world.)

Featured in the "Kunstkammer of Death" will be works that explore death in all aspects from the spiritual to the scientific. Incredible works by such artists as **Laurie Lipton**, Chicago artist **Marcos Raya** and the Argentinean collective, **Mondongo**, bring to life the Mexican Holiday, **Day of the Dead**. Additionally, the gallery will be filled with a vast assortment of artistic styles and genres including the **Dance of Death**, a late-medieval allegory on the universality of death and **Vanitas**, a type of art that employs symbolic elements, such as hourglasses, rotting fruit and skulls, to signify the brevity of life.

Additional highlights of *Morbid Curiosity: The Richard Harris Collection* include:

- Works by notable artists including **Rembrandt, Albrecht Dürer, Hans Bellmer, Odilon Redon, Pavel Tchelitchew, James Ensor, Jasper Johns** and **Robert Mapplethorpe**.
- Breathtaking **13 ft. high chandelier made of 3,000 handcrafted plaster bones** by contemporary British artist Jodie Carey. The piece directly engages the viewer with the irony or contradictions implicit in the decay/beauty aesthetic.
- Visually stunning **large-scale installation, "Tribute,"** from **Guerra de la Paz** entirely built from colorful used clothing that commemorates the Holocaust.
- Specimens, medical charts and ephemera.

- Work by contemporary artists such as **Andres Serrano**, **Vik Muniz** and **Hugo Crosthwaite**, including his commissioned 10 x 25 ft. site-specific mural, “Death March,” among others.
- Ethnographic artifacts and art from other cultures, particularly **Tibet**, **Mexico**, **Africa** and **New Guinea**.

“Ironically, the object that best personifies my own curiosity towards the subject of death can be seen in a 1927 photograph that is probably the least expensive object in the collection, costing me \$5,” said Mr. Harris. “It is a photograph of a woman named Phebe Clijde surrounded by friends in the backyard of Phebe’s home in the suburbs of San Diego. In this neighborly scene, Phebe is holding a human skull. ‘What could she be thinking? Who’s skull is this? How did the person die?’ are some of the questions that ignite Phebe’s and my curiosity.”

Richard Harris has been collecting for more than 40 years. Previous shows that have exhibited his works are The Slought Foundation, Philadelphia, Pa., *Strictly Death* (Jan. 23 – Mar. 13, 2010); The Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa, *Dancing Towards Death* (Sept. 18, 2010 – Jan. 9, 2011); and Loyola University Museum of Art (LUMA), Chicago, *The Richard Harris Collection: Balint Zsako Collages* (Feb. 3 – May 1, 2011).

The exhibition is curated by Lucas Antony Cowan and Debra L. Purden of the Visual Arts Department of the Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture.

As a companion to the exhibition, **Project Onward**, a program for Chicago artists with special needs, presents a new exhibition, **Forever 27: Music Superstars Gone to an Early Grave**, inspired by *Morbid Curiosity*, running January 13 through March 7, 2012 in the Garland corridor of the Chicago Cultural Center. The exhibition will feature portraits of musicians who have died at age 27 such as **Jim Morrison**, **Amy Winehouse**, **Janis Joplin** and **Kurt Cobain**, among others. The Shop at the Cultural Center will also be carrying exhibit-related merchandise throughout the run of *Morbid Curiosity*.

A program of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, presented in partnership with the Chicago Office of Tourism, Project Onward provides art supplies and guidance to more than 35 emerging artists in a communal workshop environment. The public is always welcome to stop in and meet the artists in their open work space, view their incredible work and even have a customized portrait created. Located on the first floor of the Chicago Cultural Center, the Project Onward studio space also includes a gallery where the artists’ original works are available for sale at affordable prices.

Public programs, exhibitions, and related educational programming presented at the Chicago Cultural Center by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events in partnership with the Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture are partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. Transportation support is provided by United Airlines, The Official Airline of the Chicago Cultural Center. Lawry’s The Prime Rib is the restaurant sponsor of Chicago Cultural Center exhibitions.

For more information on *Morbid Curiosity: The Richard Harris Collection*, visit ChicagoCulturalCenter.org, follow us on Twitter (@ExploreChicago) or ‘Like’ the Facebook page at facebook.com/ChicagoCulturalCenter.

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Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) is dedicated to promoting an ongoing celebration of the arts; supporting the people who create and sustain them; and marketing the city's abundant cultural resources to a worldwide audience. DCASE, in partnership with the Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture, programs and promotes thousands of high-quality free festivals, exhibitions, performances and holiday celebrations presented each year at Millennium Park, Grant Park, the Chicago Cultural Center and other venues throughout the city.

Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture

The Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture (COTC) is dedicated to promoting Chicago as a premier cultural destination to domestic and international leisure travelers, providing innovative visitor programs and services, and presenting free world-class public programs. COTC supports local artists through grants and other resources and creates vital opportunities for artists of all levels. For more information please visit www.ExploreChicago.org.

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