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Smithsonian American Art Museum Announces New Educational Collaboration with Cisco to Benefit Schools Affected by Hurricane Katrina

The Smithsonian American Art Museum will host 30 educators from selected schools in Mississippi and Louisiana for the first Cisco-Smithsonian American Art Museum Teacher Institute 2008 in Washington, D.C. This weeklong program, from June 16 to 20, brings interdisciplinary teams of middle school teachers and instructional technology specialists to the museum, where the teachers will use technology to integrate visual arts and primary sources into their curricula. All participants are a part of Cisco's 21st Century Schools Program (21S). This is the first time Cisco has collaborated with a national non-profit organization to develop content for 21S.

"It is deeply rewarding that the Smithsonian American Art Museum has found in Cisco a partner that shares the museum's goals to use technology in creative ways to incorporate the visual arts, a window on the American experience, into classrooms," said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. "The techniques and strategies developed through this relationship have the potential to benefit communities across the country."

"Technology is helping teachers engage students like never before. Cisco is striving to create a new model for how educators use, teach and interact with technology and this collaboration with the Smithsonian American Art Museum is a shining example of that," said Bill Fowler, 21S executive director at Cisco.

Throughout the week, educators will participate in lectures, hands-on workshops and gallery talks designed to help them integrate primary sources, particularly artworks from the museum's permanent collection, into interdisciplinary lesson plans. A major component of the program is to teach participants how to combine art and Web-based tools—such as podcasts, blogs and virtual tours—to engage students while also building a professional community that enables teachers to communicate and collaborate online. Several sessions also will focus on art interpretation as a catalyst for writing development. Participants will present their cross-curriculum lesson plan, which will be evaluated on the final day of the program.

Presentations will be made by the museum's curators, new media specialists and education staff; Brian Mull, director of research and content development at November Learning, will discuss how to create a new culture for teaching and learning; and teachers from Arlington County and Fairfax County public schools will provide classroom tested strategies for using artworks as primary sources in interdisciplinary lessons incorporating student podcasts.

At the end of the Teacher Institute, participants will return to their home districts to implement the lesson plans and other classroom strategies learned during the week's long program. The instructional technology specialists also will conduct professional development workshops, designed during the Institute, for other teachers in their school or district. Participants will engage in a series of evaluations during the year, which will measure the effectiveness and impact of the program.

The 21S program was initially created as a \$40 million philanthropic initiative to rebuild schools, with technology infrastructure and training, that were affected by Hurricane Katrina. For more information about 21S, visit the Web site at newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/2008/hd_042808.html.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is a leader in providing electronic resources to schools and the public through its national education program. In addition to offering professional development workshops to teachers, the museum provides virtual tours via videoconferencing to classrooms, as well as teacher guides, online activities and lesson plans, all of which include corresponding standards and grade levels. The museum's most recent offering, "Superhighway Scholars," was inspired by Nam June Paik's monumental video installation on view in its contemporary galleries; this state-history classroom activity and other resources are available at americanart.si.edu/education.

About the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with approximately 41,500 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. Its main building, a National Historic Landmark, is located at Eighth and F Streets N.W., above the Gallery Place Metrorail station, in the heart of a revitalized downtown arts district. It is open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Web site: americanart.si.edu.

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