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BASEBALL: THE ALL-AMERICAN GAME

May 27 – September 9, 2012

CAFAM celebrates baseball season with exhibition of folk art inspired by America's national pastime



"Strike-em-Out" Batter and Catcher, Strike-em-Out Baseball Company, paint on cast metal, iron, steel, leather, fabric, patented 1929. Courtesy of the Craft and Folk Art Museum and Gary Cypres

LOS ANGELES — Opening at the height of baseball season, the Craft and Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) presents *Baseball: The All-American Game* from May 26 through September 9, 2012. For the first time in Los Angeles, the public will have access to the largest exhibition of baseball-related traditional folk art since the American Folk Art Museum's historic *The Perfect Game: America Looks at Baseball* in 2003. This exhibition will explore baseball's impact on American folk art made between the late-1800s to present day. Approximately 75 works of baseball-inspired folk art and memorabilia will be shown from the private collection of Gary Cypres, owner of one of the largest sports memorabilia collections in the world.

No other sport is more ingrained within the American national consciousness than the great game of baseball. Baseball became the first organized sport in the United States in 1857. After the Civil War ended in 1865, the sport became increasingly important in uniting a population that was previously divided. As baseball's popularity grew throughout the country, its imagery emerged in all mediums of popular culture.

Hand-painted tobacco advertisements in the exhibition underscore how the tobacco industry capitalized on the phenomenon by offering collectible baseball cards and novelty items to boost cigarette sales. "Baseball Hero Quilt" (c. 1916) is an example of flannels collected from dozens of cigarette packets sewn together as a remarkable patchwork quilt of professional baseball players. Consumer giveaways at ballparks also provided opportunities for additional collectibles such as the "Fan for a Fan" (c. 1910), designed for female spectators.

When Americans weren't watching or playing baseball, the sport's presence persisted in daily American life. Baseball-themed children's board games and penny arcade figures like "Boston Arcade Figure" (c. 1895) and "Atta Boy" (1932) demonstrate the ease with which the sport translated into non-physical leisure activities. Traveling carnivals presented hand-carved and painted baseball-toss games. And before the widespread use of radio, public establishments like bars and hotels kept manually operated scoreboards for people to keep track of their favorite teams' standings.

The nostalgia and impact of baseball imagery continues to resonate today. Ray Materson, a self-taught artist, rehabilitated himself in prison by learning to embroider portraits of baseball players with threads from unraveled socks, coveted today for their handiwork and the implied story of salvation. Alison Saar carved the faces of Negro League players' into the ends of baseball bats in her work "Bat Boys" (2001). With this work, she appropriates the folk art of woodcarving to reflect on baseball's discriminatory past while also connecting traditional folk art practice with contemporary art.



2009 New York Yankees: Mark Teixeira, Ray Materson, unraveled sock, shoelace thread on cotton, polyester, 2009. Courtesy of the Craft and Folk Art Museum and Gary Cypres

A public opening reception for Baseball: The All-American Game will take place on Saturday, May 26 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

This exhibition is generously sponsored by the American Folk Art Society.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

CAFAM will offer exhibition-related workshops and events in conjunction with the exhibition. Other events will include CraftLab family workshops, held on the second Saturday of each month from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Collector's Talk with Gary Cypres

Sunday, July 8

3:00 p.m.

Situated on historic Museum Row since 1973, the Craft & Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) is an invaluable contributor to Los Angeles culture, exhibiting current artists with intriguing perspectives and distinctive practices. Exploring the leading edge of craft, art, and design, CAFAM gives audience to diverse makers and artists whose work is often not represented in larger art institutions. The museum is a place to see art and make art — all under one roof. CAFAM coordinates a robust roster of hands-on workshops led by professional artists and makers. The intimate, atypical museum space and independent spirit at CAFAM combine to create an atmosphere of excitement and innovation, where people in Los Angeles deepen their relationships to art, creativity and one another. For more information, visit www.cafam.org

Location: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

Admission: FREE every Sunday

Regularly: \$7 for adults; \$5 for students, teachers, seniors, and veterans; free for CAFAM members

Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; closed Mondays. Every first Thursday of the month, extended hours 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.