

For immediate release

The Monroe County Board of Commissioner's Art in Public Places Committee is pleased to announce the installation and unveiling of the public art in the new Freeman Justice Center. On Friday, November 14th at the Grand Opening Celebration from 4:00-6:00, visitors will be able to view these new works for the first time.

The artists selected by the Monroe County Art in Public Places Committee have spent the last several years working to create site-specific artwork which enhances and complements the magnificent building. These works of art are part of the County's progressive 1% ordinance for Art in Public Places, which established funding for public art which creates a legacy for our entire community and staffed by the Florida Keys Council for the Arts.

The Freeman Family is being honored for one hundred and six years of public service. Former Monroe County Mayor Shirley Freeman states, "I'm delighted that the Freeman Justice Center is the first major building in the County to have the Art in Public Places program as part of the project from the very beginning. The artwork enhances the architecture, and creates serenity and makes a connection to history for all its visitors."

Even before entering the stately structure, one is immediately drawn to the dramatic entrance to the Center, highlighted by one of the more unusual works of Public Art. Etched into the concrete sidewalk using metallic, pearlescence, iron oxide-based pigments in water-based stains, artists Steven Ochs and Gerald Taylor created a masterful, "**Images in Concrete**." This mural depicts five historic "Freeman family" buildings in an eight foot diameter round design in perspective. The artists stated, "We wanted to capture the rich history of the family as well as leave an accurate rendition of these beautiful and historically significant structures." Mr. Ochs and Mr. Taylor arrived from Magnolia, Arkansas late this summer to install their artwork. They were most impressed by the grandeur and beauty of the entranceway, and were honored to have been chosen for their design that truly integrates art and architecture.

Once through the main doors, visitors are drawn to the etched stainless steel elevator doors co-created by metalsmiths, Terry Thommes and Reen Stanhouse. Ms. Stanhouse, a long time Keys' resident and architectural metalsmith, created an island collage etched in stainless steel after the untimely passing of her friend and fellow artist Thommes. An internationally recognized sculptor and teacher whose original concept was the inspiration for the elevator doors, Thommes' well-known mangrove mandala resides in the middle of each door. Reen feels, "The images on the doors beckon and enchant you. The light reflects and plays with the etchings just as it does on the water, sky and vegetation of our "**Island Home**". As you sit on the lobby bench and gaze into the doors you find yourself slipping into the backcountry, and hear the quiet that surrounds you in a nearby mangrove channel. I feel proud and most honored to have been a part of this project and the art legacy on this island that I love."

Probably the most dramatic piece commissioned for the building is a stainless steel sculpture entitled, "**Epic Duet**" by renowned California sculptor, James T. Russell. He specializes in creating large scale, symbolic, non-representational, highly-polished, durable pieces, "offering a lifetime of value." Mr. Russell proposed, "my sculpture will reflect energy and natural beauty, and shows the Freeman family's mission of the administration of justice rising upward in a positive direction."

Tucked away in the child's witness waiting room is a unique and vibrant mosaic wall

sculpture named, "**Star Witness**." Keith Oliver, a public art and urban design artist from Virginia created the site specific piece. He says, "It was a welcome opportunity to work at such an intimate scale and with true abandon. While much of my work aims to provide a heightened sense of context to users, in this case I tried to create something to get my clients minds off of their circumstances and into their own imaginations. Creating a piece for Key West gave me a chance to use a vibrant color palette that I love, but that doesn't play in every community."

As a final touch that features the rich history of the Florida Keys, Key Largo artist Daniel Lawler has created four oil on canvas murals depicting historical and symbolic scenes of his beloved Keys. He states in his proposal, "I have seen many changes in our area and have tried to capture the romance, spirit and history in my paintings. "

The Monroe County Art in Public Places program serves the community through the implementation of art installations and educational programming dedicated to enriching the public environment, and to preserving and enhancing the artistic and civic pride of Monroe County. The program further promotes collaboration and creative art projects that improve the visual quality of public spaces. At their most successful, these public art installations can transform public spaces from ordinary civic areas to sites that can lift the spirit and connect with the community.

The goals of the program are several: to enhance the artistic heritage of Monroe County, to give dimension to the public environment for residents and visitors, to increase public awareness to works of art, and to promote understanding and awareness of the visual arts. The Art in Public Places program has given Monroe County national visibility in the arts and a leadership role in public programming. Through Art in Public Places, the County supports the development of a unique and vital civic environment.

For more information on the Art in Public Places program or the Florida Keys Council of the Arts, please visit, www.keysarts.com or call Executive Director, Elizabeth Young at 305-295-4369.