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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The University Gallery begins the 1992 fall semester with two exhibitions that question the interrelationship between Jerry Kearns personal and political in today's society. Cover: The Deadly Art of Illusion is a retrospective exhibition of work by an artist who, for over twenty years, has explored the chicken-or-egg phenomenon of the individual's place within the collective and the ways in which the collective influences Deep Cover: The Deadly Art of Illusion, individual opinions. which includes 20 large-scale paintings created between 1982 and 1989, was organized by Tyler Galleries, Tyler School of Art of Temple University and was curated by Don Desmett. The exhibition is on view in the University Gallery from September 12 through October 23, with an opening reception on Friday, September 18 from 5 to 7 p.m. The exhibition is being shared with Herter Art Gallery of the University's Department of Art, which is located in Herter Hall. The exhibition's viewing in Herter Art Gallery begins on September 19, the day after the opening reception and continues through October 9.

Stylistically, Kearns layers dramatically rendered cartoon-style images with scenes borrowed or adapted from the gritty realism of the news media. The contrast in the collaged styles comments upon the media's ubiquitous pairing of fictive images from advertising intend to create a sellable/believable reality) documentary photographs (which hope to capitalize on the dramatic moment). On a more personal level, the stylistic contrast reflects two of Kearns's acknowledged artistic mentors, Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol, both of whom freely took from the reservoir of popular images and products. In his early work, Lichtenstein invented theatrical, non sequitur scenarios based on and rendered in a comic book style with tantalizingly implied narratives; Warhol emphasized the cult of celebrity with the candid repetition of dislocated media/commercial images until they achieved iconic status. uses the detached and reflexive methods of Lichtenstein and Warhol to extrude social and political meaning through the contrast of images and quoted styles.

Naked Brunch (1985) depicts a man and a woman, their clothes ripped and tattered, floating in a lifeboat. An air of wild desperation permeates the scene as the two begin to devour the whole fish they have presumably just plucked from the water. Behind them is a close-up view of the Statue of Liberty's head, which is in the

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process of being repaired and cleaned as evidenced by the surrounding scaffolding. As in most of Kearns's paintings, the image is ambiguous. Lady Liberty symbolizes the opportunity that awaits those who approach her shores with the hope of beginning a better life. Although the reality for immigrants to the United States is often frustratingly difficult, the couple in Kearns's raft appear to have been set adrift from an accustomed American middle-class existence. Their social unmooring is underscored by the painting's title: brunch may once have been a leisurely Sunday habit but is an inappropriate term for their present meal. The scene also plays on the recent culinary fad of eating sushi-Japanese-style raw fish. What was once the fashion here becomes a matter of survival.

A painting in which Kearns conflates two seemingly incongruous images is that of Madonna and Child (1986). This work merges the composed and glamorous facial features of Marilyn Monroe with the ravaged body of Kim Phuc, the napalmed child whose photograph, taken during the Vietnam War, shows her vainly running down a roadoutstretched, face in torment--to escape her Interpretation, in this case, is less ambiguous: a woman, who could not possibly live up to her assumed image as goddess, and a child, whose once anonymous body became a sacrificial symbol of an impossible war, are here portrayed as victims of powerful and rapacious industries. The painting's ambiguity lies in Kearns's projection of the viewer's possible complicity, either through unquestioned action or belief, in national myths and self-serving images. What underlies the majority of Kearns's work is not simply the need to critically examine specific social injustices and dilemmas, but also a call for self-examination as one exists within a polity.

Concurrent with the University Gallery's presentation of <u>Deep Cover</u> is the exhibition <u>WPA: Prints and Drawings from the Permanent Collection</u> featuring 35 works by artists employed through the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration. The FAP was established in 1935 as one of the government-sponsored art programs devised by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal administration to mitigate the disastrous effects of America's Great Depression. In operation for eight years, the FAP employed over 5,000 artists nationwide for the purposes of documenting America's then-current plight and of creating images that would remind a distraught people of their inner strength. The Gallery's exhibition includes urban and rural scenes that portray moods ranging from abjection to conviction, as well as images descriptive of daily life. Works by Fred Becker, Minnetta Good, Louis Lozowick, Claire Millman and Alfred Sessler are among those on view.

Claire Millman's lithograph titled <u>Factory Recess</u> (n.d.) shows a group of men and women who are attempting to steal some moments of carefree play within the courtyard of a factory complex. A tight

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enclosure is visually created by the position of the cement walls and factory's facades which appear to tip forward. The formal composition squeezes the figures into an uncomfortably shallow space within the picture's field. Sharp angles and stiff, exaggerated features emphasize the sense of urban monotony that many were experiencing at the time. The bleak circumstances evoked here are reinforced by the inclusion of the heads of two men in each of the print's lower corners: while one raises a hand to his furrowed brow and looks back in bemusement towards the depicted scene, the other stares out, inanimately, at us.

Contrasting with the aforementioned view, <u>Man's Canyons</u> (1936), by Samuel Margolies, celebrates America's greatness as seen through the planning and growth of her cities. In Margolies' etching, a divine light casts its rays across a field of skyscrapers that soar above miniscule people and cars. The print's title equates the grandeur of natural wonders with that of man-made environments. Implicit is the message that America, by drawing on her past achievements, will see continued success in the future.

differing sentiments portrayed in examples 4 these two contributed to the discussions taking place during the 1930s of what 'American' art should be, of what manner and subject matter America's social condition. Unemployment, represented homelessness, racism--the situation in the United States today differs only in degree from the one of nearly 60 years ago. are, as well, presently engaged in a debate concerning government support of the arts. If a government's ultimate responsibility is to tend to a country's physical and cultural welfare and, if the health of a nation is, in part, dependent on the creative energies of her artists, then the current debate does not concern the definition of a typically American art, the artistic but articulation of a diverse America. To this end, the creation and support of an art that would reach the broadest possible public becomes little more than a governmental tool that denies the breadth that can be achieved by so many individual voices. What is of fundamental concern is the role played by a democratic government in reconciling the rights of the individual with the needs of the community: in essence, the interpretation of democracy.

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall.