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***Adventures & Misadventures;  
The Art of Mary Lovelace O'Neal***

**Togonon Gallery  
October 11 – November 24, 2007**

**San Francisco, July 23, 2007** – The exhibition *Adventures & Misadventures; The Art of Mary Lovelace O'Neal* will be on view at the Togonon Gallery in San Francisco October 11, 2007 through November 24, 2007. The Togonon Gallery exhibition is the first to showcase the newest body of work by Mary Lovelace O'Neal, who since the mid-1970s has been recognized as a significant influence in the American art world.

*Adventures & Misadventures; The Art of Mary Lovelace O'Neal* will feature large-scale paintings, mixed-media drawings, as well as a stunning array of her works created over the past 40 years including *Meaningless Ritual*, *Senseless Superstition*, and *Requiem for a Daffodil*. O'Neal's exhibit at San Francisco's Togonon Gallery stands to celebrate an accomplished artistic career creating visceral, bold, and telling paintings that as gallery director Julina Togonon notes are "provocative compositions which reiterate the significance of Mary's work in the realm of Expressionism. This upcoming exhibition," Togonon says "recognizes O'Neal as one of the foremost female African-American abstract expressionists and represents new possibilities within her work – Mary has moved from abstraction to stronger elements of representation and figuration, a style with which she has admittedly played hide and seek over her long career."

Mary Lovelace O'Neal, born in Jackson, Mississippi in 1942, entered into a visual discourse with the art world in the mid-1960s, today she has positioned herself in a landscape of accomplished painters whose careers continue to thrive well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a young woman steeped in 1960s Civil Rights politics and studying art at Howard University, O'Neal captured the attention of her professors and colleagues alike. By the 1980s O'Neal had created a body of work that had been exhibited and collected around the world. Today, recently retired as Chair of UC Berkeley's Department of Art Practice, O'Neal notes, "I now have everyone and everything extraneous out of my studio. Like a child who gets her first set of crayons and drawing paper, I am painting with great abandon. It's a marvelous feeling to be free of any constraints. I don't worry about anything I make anymore. The figures are present, showered and powdered, and ready to work...they're in plain sight, fully clothed and in their right minds. Now, I

make what strikes my fancy. I can and do violate even my own rules. It's the freest I've ever been – I'm absolutely and finally maximizing my freedom.”

Dubbed everything from feisty, deliberate and audacious, to quietly assertive, charming and most often agreed upon by critics and colleagues, an accomplished artist and consummate storyteller, O'Neal's paintings elicit a similar power. They are as she notes, not stories unto themselves, but part of a larger life view. Trained and mentored by artist, art historian, collector and curator David C. Driskell, O'Neal's work has grown over the years to embody two major streams of American art, Abstract Expressionism along with Minimalist constructs. O'Neal's current work, primarily that of acrylics and mixed media on canvas and paper, shows a continuum of self-definition, a conscious refusal to become a mannerist. The new images featured in the Togonon Gallery's *Adventures & Misadventures; The Art of Mary Lovelace O'Neal* exhibition, conspire to call forth a brilliance and style complimentary of this painter's great strength of conviction, tenacity, and talent.

Times, politics, and O'Neal's painting style have evolved over the past 40 years since she attended Howard University, received a prestigious scholarship to study at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 1963, and completed her M.F.A. on scholarship at Columbia University as the only African-American in her class in 1968. O'Neal went on to study with Robert Blackburn, becoming an accomplished printmaker, which lead to residences in Morocco, France and Chile, she was the recipient of numerous awards for her work including, the 1993 Artiste en France Award and the 2006 Brandywine Distinguished Artist Award, and eventually after many years teaching became Chair the UC Berkeley's Department of Art Practice, retiring in 2006. O'Neal, no longer busy teaching, is once-again creating new works with fervor, and the upcoming exhibition at the Togonon Gallery is a window into a magical world of success and achievement, a glimpse at an artist conjuring new adventures with zeal.

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## About Togonon Gallery

Togonon Gallery originally opened as the “Washington Square Gallery” in 1994 in the historic North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco. The gallery started out in a 1,000 square-foot space primarily showcasing local artists. In January 2006, the gallery expanded and relocated to a 3,000 sq. ft. space at 77 Geary, near Union Square in downtown San Francisco. The gallery presents 8-10 shows annually, with national and international shows presented 1-2 times per year. Togonon Gallery became a member of the San Francisco Art Dealers Association in 2003.

Togonon Gallery works primarily with emerging and established artists from the San Francisco Bay Area and the West Coast, in all media. Many of our established artists were active in the major art movements of the twentieth century, including Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism and the Bay Area Figurative and Realist traditions. Their work as practitioners and teachers has paved the way for contemporary painters.

Our emerging artists investigate a myriad of themes inspired by contemporary American life. Individually, each of our artists explores subject matter of a universal resonance, filtered through the particular cultural lens of the West Coast and their personal experiences. Themes include the politics of living in a multicultural society, the point of intersection between the natural world and an industrialized society, and experimentation with the process of creation and a combination of mediums.

We recognize that the West coast is a confluence of cultural influences. The works of West Coast artists reveal tangible connections to other places and modes of thought, simultaneously paying tribute to American and worldwide influences, culture and geography. We are interested in new ways of looking at American art through cultural influences. We strive to challenge the contemporary definitions of art and to nurture artists whose work has the potential to contribute significantly to the historical art dialogue.

Togonon Gallery is a dynamic exhibition space where both artists and the public discover the distinctive qualities inherent in West Coast art. Our passion is to present exhibitions and events that ignite discourse on contemporary life and engage and expand the audience for the arts. We endeavor to keep energy alive for the arts.

Togonon Gallery is located at 77 Geary Street between Grant Avenue and Kearny Street one block away from San Francisco's Union Square. The gallery is on the 2nd floor of the Grant & Geary Building.

For more information please visit:  
[www.togonongallery.com](http://www.togonongallery.com) or call 415.398.5572

## About the Artist

O'Neal has played a central role in the renaissance of African American culture over the past four decades. Known for her Abstract Expressionist paintings, she has received acclaim in national and international circles.

O'Neal's paintings captivate with intense color and surface texture. Her art works are bold, complex, vibrant and insistent. Within the paintings lie an inquiry into structure and scale, but still they remain enveloped in humanism. O'Neal describes her working process as "letting accidents happen, until they become part of a structure." The titles of her works attract as much attention as the size. Titles such as *Running Freed More Slaves Than Lincoln Ever Did* and *Racism Is Like Rain, Either It Is Raining Or It Is Gathering Somewhere* emphasize the political direction of her provocative work inspired by personal history and extensive travels.

Born in Jackson, Mississippi in February 1942, O'Neal received a B.F.A from Howard University and her M.F.A from Columbia University. She was a professor at UC Berkeley Art department and held the position as Chair for numerous years, until retiring in 2006. O'Neal has had over 50 solo exhibitions and exhibited internationally in places such as Chile, Japan, Morocco, Senegal, France, Malaysia and Costa Rica, to name a few. She has participated in over 160 group exhibits and has her works in 39 public collections across 12 states and 6 countries. Most recently, O'Neal was awarded the 2006 Distinguished Artist Award by the Brandywine Workshop in Philadelphia.

### Selected Museum Collections:

National Museum Of Fine Arts, Santiago, Chile  
Ministry Of Culture, Morocco  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art  
The National Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Costa Rica  
The Cite International Des Arts Paris, France  
The Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC  
Oakland Museum, California  
Arizona State University Museum  
Brooklyn Museum, New York  
California Afro-American Museum Foundation, Los Angeles  
Howard University, Washington D.C.  
Columbia University, New York

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