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Contact: Morgan Kroll, Hammer Communications, 310-443-7016, mkroll@hammer.ucla.edu

**VETERANS GROUP PROMPTS HAMMER MUSEUM TO DEVELOP
SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR MILITARY FAMILIES**

Visit inspires museum to offer year-round free admission and exclusive tours for vets, active military, & their families

Los Angeles, CA – A friendship with a group of local veterans had led the Hammer Museum to offer free admission to all veterans, active military personnel and their families every day of the year. Hammer staff is also working to develop plans for free veterans' tours on a regular basis. The museum is offering this program after spending time with a group of art-minded veterans from the nearby Veterans Affairs campus. The program aims to thank veterans for their service, help newly-returned vets adjust to civilian life, and introduce relocated military families to their new community.

A memorable afternoon

"We can practically see the Veteran's Affairs campus from our windows," explained Claudia Bestor, the Hammer's Director of Public Programs. "So they are literally our neighbors. Our staff had been planning for awhile to invite them over to spend time at the museum."

In August 2010, Hammer staff welcomed a group of 18 veterans to the museum for a guided tour and luncheon. The visit coincided with *Outside the Box*, an exhibition of works by internationally-renowned printmaker Jacob Samuel, who led the tour.

"When they came here to tour the print show, we found out that they had just built a print studio at the VA," said Bestor. "Many of them were even wearing tee shirts they had screen printed themselves. They had lots of technical questions for Jacob."

This print studio and the vets that participated were part of artist Lauren Bon's *Strawberry Flag* project—a large-scale, environmental artwork involving fruit and vegetable gardens tended by veterans through the VA's work therapy program.

"At lunch we had fantastic conversations about gardening, art, the VA and the military," Bestor recalled. "I sat with a 76-year old Korean War vet in charge of the horticultural aspects of the *Strawberry Flag*. As lunch ended we all exchanged information and promised our neighbors that we wouldn't be strangers."

At the conclusion of the luncheon, the Hammer also announced that admission would now be free to all veterans and their families.

A creative community partnership

The Hammer participated in a similar program last summer when it joined the Blue Star Museums initiative. Organized by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Blue Star program

offered free admission to active military and their families at over 800 museums nationwide. The program ran from Memorial Day through Labor Day, 2010.

“Our staff is committed to connecting with the veterans and active military in our community,” said Ann Philbin, Director of the Hammer Museum. “When we had the printmaking group visit in August, we knew immediately that we wanted to extend this invitation permanently.”

For this particular group of veterans, time at the Hammer is an opportunity to broaden their understanding of art and printmaking techniques. But for veterans and civilians alike, the museum is a perfect place to spend quality time with their family and community.

This is especially true for families of active military, who are often subject to frequent relocations. The museum’s free programs are a valuable way for veterans to connect to their new community. Veterans returning from active combat may need time to re-acclimate to civilian life, and according to the National Military Family Association, participation in interactive activities— such as museum programs—can help ease this adjustment for everyone.

“There is activity at the Hammer every night of the week,” notes Sarah Stifler, the museum’s Director of Communications. “From readings, lectures and screening to kids writing workshops, yoga, and family films – there is something for everyone, we are proud to be a place for the community to gather.”

A lasting friendship

The partnership between the veterans’ group and the Hammer has developed since August. Since then, Hammer staff have visited the VA numerous times to have lunch and tour their printmaking studio. Jacob Samuel has offered to lead a print workshop at the VA, and some of the veterans have returned to the museum to explore exhibitions and touch base with staff.

This Veterans Day, the museum extended another invitation to its friends at the VA campus. This time it asked them to help come up with a standing date – perhaps quarterly – for vets to enjoy an exclusive guided tour of the Hammer’s changing exhibitions.

The free admission program is open to all veterans, as well as active military bearing a Geneva Convention Common Access Card (CAC), a DD Form 1173 ID Card, or a DD Form 1173-1 ID card. It also covers admission for up to five immediate family members.

ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum, a public arts unit of the University of California, Los Angeles, is dedicated to exploring the diversity of artistic expression through the ages. Its collections, exhibitions, and programs span the classic to the cutting-edge in art, architecture, and design, recognizing that artists play a crucial role in all aspects of culture and society.

The museum houses the Armand Hammer Collection of Old Master, Impressionist, and Post-Impressionist paintings and the Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection. The Hammer's newest collection, the Hammer Contemporary Collection, is highlighted by works on paper, particularly drawings and photographs from Southern California. The museum also houses the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, comprising more than 45,000 prints, drawings, photographs, and artists' books from the Renaissance to the present; and oversees the management of the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden on the UCLA campus.

The Hammer presents major single-artist and thematic exhibitions of historical and contemporary art. It also presents approximately ten Hammer Projects exhibitions each year, providing international and local artists with a laboratory-like environment to create new work or to present existing work in a new context.

As a cultural center, the Hammer offers a diverse range of free public programs throughout the year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, and music performances. The Hammer's Billy Wilder Theater houses these widely acclaimed public programs and is the new home of the UCLA Film & Television Archive's renowned cinematheque.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

For current program and exhibition information call **310-443-7000** or visit **www.hammer.ucla.edu**.

Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 11am – 7pm; Thursday, 11am – 9 pm; Sunday, 11am – 5 pm; closed Mondays, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Admission: \$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors (65+) and UCLA Alumni Association members; free for Museum members, students with identification, UCLA faculty/staff, military personnel, veterans, and visitors 17 and under. The Museum is free on Thursdays for all visitors. Public programs are always free.

Location/Parking: The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard, at Westwood Boulevard. Parking is available under the Museum. Rate is \$3 for three hours with Museum validation.

Hammer Museum Tours: For group tour reservations and information, call 310-443-7041.