

MVC TO HOST FAMOUS GEE'S BEND QUILT ARTISTS

Reception set for Sept. 25 on the MVC campus.

Marshall, MO (September 9, 2009) – The Missouri Valley College art department will host the Gee's Bend Quilt Artists at a reception at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 25 in the Ferguson Center R. Wilson Brown Room on the MVC campus. The Gee's Bend women are brought to MVC with the support of the County Patchwork Quilt Guild.

According to the Gee's Bend Quilt Artists website, the group was founded in the small rural community of Gee's Bend, Ala. It was the site of cotton plantations, primarily the lands of Joseph Gee and his relative Mark Pettway, who bought the Gee estate in 1850.

After the Civil War, the freed slaves took the name Pettway, became tenant farmers for the Pettway family, and founded an all-black community nearly isolated from the surrounding world. During the Great Depression, the federal government stepped in to purchase land and homes for the community, bringing strange renown — as an "Alabama Africa" — to this sleepy hamlet.

The town's women developed a distinctive, bold, and sophisticated quilting style based on traditional American and African American quilts, but with a geometric simplicity reminiscent of Amish quilts and modern art. The women of Gee's Bend passed their skills and aesthetic down through at least six generations to the present.

"The theme for the evening is 'Oh the Places You'll Go' from the Dr. Seuss book by the same title," said Charity-Mika Woodard, MVC art department chair. "Art can take you many places and through their art the ladies of the Gee's Bend have traveled the world, have numerous books, and a play all based on their amazing story. They will be sharing their story and answering questions on this one magical evening."

The Gee's Bend Quilt Artists have received much international acclaim. *Newsweek*, National Public Radio's *Talk of the Nation*, *Art in America*, *CBS News Sunday Morning*, PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, the *Martha Stewart Living* television show, *House and Garden*, *Oprah's O* magazine, and *Country Home* magazine are among the hundreds of media organizations that have celebrated the quilts and the history of this unique town.

Art critics worldwide have compared the quilts to the works of important artists such as Henri Matisse and Paul Klee. The *New York Times* called the quilts "some of the most miraculous works of modern art America has produced.

"We're excited to host the Gee's Bend women on our campus," said MVC President Bonnie Humphrey. "The brilliant and dynamic quilts created by these women represent their heritage and we're honored to have them on campus and in Marshall."

A reception for the artists will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Ferguson Center R. Wilson Brown Room on the MVC campus. No reservations are required and the event is free and open to the public. For more information about the Gee's Bend Quilt Artists, visit <http://www.quiltsofgeesbend.com>.

ABOUT MISSOURI VALLEY COLLEGE

Missouri Valley College is a liberal arts college that provides educational, social and cultural experiences in a decidedly Christian environment. Established in 1889, MVC offers over 30 majors and 7 pre-professional programs, and 15 sports. The most popular majors include education and business, and the newest majors are nursing, graphic design, dance, and hospitality/tourism management, which will begin in Fall 2009. The liberal arts heritage focuses on scholarship, critical thinking and academic excellence to prepare students to become members of a responsible citizenry. For more information, call (660) 831-4000 or visit www.moval.edu.

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