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**THE ARTWORK AND SOCIAL CONSCIENCE OF CHICAGO
RENAISSANCE SCULPTOR MARION PERKINS ON DISPLAY
AT CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 23, 2008

The Chicago Public Library's Vivian G. Harsh Collection of Afro-American History and Literature announces the opening of ***"To See Reality in a New Light: The Art and Activism of Marion Perkins"***, a major retrospective exhibition on the life and work of Chicago Renaissance sculptor and social activist Marion Perkins. The free, eleven-month, exhibit will be located in the Carter G. Woodson Regional Library Exhibit Gallery, 9525 S. Halsted St. The exhibit will run from January 31, 2009 through December 31, 2009.

The Marion Perkins exhibition will include original sculptures by Perkins, on loan to the Harsh Collection from the Art Institute of Chicago and the DuSable Museum of African American History, as well as from members of the Perkins family, art galleries, and private collectors. The exhibit also features original correspondence, rare photographs, and memorabilia from the holdings of the Harsh Research Collection.

A special opening program, hosted by the Harsh Research Collection, will be held Saturday, January 31, 2009, beginning at 1:30 p.m. at Woodson Regional Library. The program is free and open to the public. A panel of distinguished speakers will include **Useni Perkins** and **Toussaint Perkins**, Marion Perkins' sons; **Dr. Margaret Burroughs**, DuSable Museum founder; **Haki Madhubuti**, Chicago author and poet; **Calvin Jones**, Chicago muralist; **Daniel Schulman**, art historian; **Elise Ward**, daughter of Chicago Renaissance playwright Theodore Ward; and **Douglas Williams**, Chicago sculptor.

Marion Perkins began to carve as an artistic "pastime," and after taking some sculpture classes, he became recognized as an artist with immense talent. Perkins worked as a laborer all of his life and, although he was never able to devote himself full-time to his artwork, Perkins became one of the most important visual artists in the Chicago Renaissance.

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During his career, Perkins was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship and featured in prominent magazines and newspapers. His work also was featured in the 1940 American Negro Exposition. In the years that followed, Perkins repeatedly won prizes and awards at the Art Institute of Chicago. Additionally, he combined his unique artistic vantage point with a fierce dedication to social justice. In 1959, he became one of the founders of the National Conference of Negro Artists, and gave the keynote address to its first convention. He died in 1961 at age 53. The Chicago Public Library is proud to present this Marion Perkins retrospective on the 30th anniversary of the last major exhibit on his life and work, presented by the Library in 1979 at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Now celebrating its 135th year, the Chicago Public Library continues to encourage lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through materials, programs and cutting-edge technology.

The Chicago Public Library is comprised of the Harold Washington Library Center, two regional libraries and 76 neighborhood branches. All locations provide free access to a rich collection of books, DVDs, audio books and music; the Internet and WiFi; sophisticated research databases, many of which can be accessed from a home or office computer; newspapers and magazines; and continue to serve as cultural centers, presenting the highest quality author discussions, exhibits and programs for children, teens and adults.

The Harold Washington Library Center, Carter G. Woodson Regional Library and Conrad Sulzer Regional Library are open 7 days a week, the remaining 76 branch libraries are open 6 days a week and patrons can access all of the libraries' collections online 24 hours a day. For more information, please visit chicagopubliclibrary.org, or call the Chicago Public Library Press Office at (312) 747-4050.

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