

Elizabeth Catlett



April 15, 1915 - April 2, 2012

A New Orleans Tribute

Saturday, October 6, 2012 at 12 noon
Dillard University, Cook Hall



STELLA JONES GALLERY



Celebrated artist and former Dillard faculty member Elizabeth Catlett will be honored at a special engagement and exhibit held at Dillard University (DU), on October 6, 2012. Created in conjunction with Stella Jones Gallery, the show will feature many special pieces on display on the DU campus.

Elizabeth Catlett's refined, sensual sculptures of wood, bronze, and marble, as well as a prolific body of expressionistic, often politically charged prints, have made her one of the most celebrated American artists. During a career that spanned more than seventy years, Catlett has been featured in more than sixty solo exhibitions of her work. Since 1946, she resided largely in Mexico and continued to produce art until her death in April of 2012 at the age of ninety-six.

Catlett was born in Washington, D.C. to Mary Carson Catlett and John Catlett, a professor of mathematics at Tuskegee Institute who died before she was born. Though trained as a teacher, following her husband's death, Elizabeth's mother worked a series of jobs to support the family. Observing her mother's strategies for survival and hearing narratives about her enslaved grand-parents' lives, Catlett would later discuss the impact of their strength and perseverance on her own life and career.

Artist and art historian Samella Lewis, Catlett's biographer and former student, has written of Catlett's tenure as head of the art department at Dillard University from 1940-1942: "Elizabeth Catlett was a commanding and fascinating individual... She stood up to everybody... Her immersion in the civil rights movement, labor movements, and human rights in general was a threat to the status quo and an embarrassment to the conservative officials of the university, but she persisted until her departure in the spring of 1942... She confronted police brutality, bus drivers on segregated seating, and college administrators on curriculum." Such experiences would result in a recurrence of socially progressive themes in her work.

For more information about the tribute, please contact John Barnes at (504) 816-4448.