Louisville, KY (Wednesday, November 6, 2019) On Friday, November 15, the Speed Art Museum will open the first exhibition to examine Kentucky’s relationship to the horse through art. *Tales from the Turf: The Kentucky Horse, 1825 – 1950* will feature paintings, sculpture, photographs, drawings, prints, and manuscripts to tell the story of the horse in the Bluegrass State. The exhibition will reflect all the ways that images of the horse have represented the Commonwealth’s identity, history, mythology, and agricultural economy, from its earliest days through the mid-twentieth century.

Traveling in chronological order, *Tales from the Turf* begins with Kentucky still on the edge of the western frontier. Settlers and early horse breeders looked to the gentlemen farmers of Virginia for inspiration in business and collecting art. Sporting art traditions carried over from England helped launch the Thoroughbred trade, and by the late nineteenth century, an industry focused on the “betterment of the
breed” would witness the rise of over 60 racecourses across the state. Artists such as Edward Troye made their careers meticulously depicting the nuances of these bloodlines, some of which can be traced to Thoroughbreds still racing today.

An agricultural and aristocratic pastime became a multi-billion-dollar industry in the twentieth century, and the desire for collecting images of the horse has only grown over the decades. As the industry has blossomed, so too has the complexity of its narrative, growing richer as it expands to include the voices of jockeys, handlers, track employees, farm hands, and more. Presenting works from Kentucky’s leading private collections, Tales from the Turf will change Kentucky’s understanding of its own history through the act of making, collecting, and sharing the art of the horse.

“One of the many wonderful things about curating this show has been reaching out to the Kentucky community and connecting on a topic so central to our state,” said Erika Holmquist-Wall, Mary & Barry Bingham Sr., Curator of European & American Painting & Sculpture at the Speed Art Museum.

With the help of researcher Johna Ebling and writer/historian Genevieve Baird Lacer, Holmquist-Wall was able to weave together the history of the storied and lucrative horse racing industry in the Bluegrass from 1825 – 1950. “If you love horses and if you love Kentucky, then this is the show for you,” said Stephen Reily, Director of the Speed Art Museum. “It’s not only the first and only time these artworks will be exhibited together but also a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see so many works from private collections, some never seen before in public.”

Tales from the Turf is the latest exhibition to open at the Speed, which has been focusing on artworks and exhibitions from Kentucky throughout the year. The final Kentucky-themed exhibition opens in December and will feature works by an African-American artist and illustrator from Louisville’s West End in the 1930’s, entitled Loose Nuts: Bert Hurley’s West End Story.

Programs at the Speed Art Museum presented in association with Tales from the Turf include:

- **Thursday, November 14, 5:30 – 7 pm**: Patron Circle Exhibition Opening Preview Reception
- **Thursday, November 14, 7 – 9 pm**: Speed Member Exhibition Preview Opening
- **Friday, November 15, 5 – 10 pm**: Public opening as part of After Hours at the Speed!
- **Sunday, December 1, 2 – 3 pm**: Project to Preserve African-American Turf History (PPAATH): Tales of African-American Kentucky Derby Achievements from 1875 – 1902
  - A discussion of pioneering efforts of African-American racehorse men who shaped the early legacy of the racing industry.

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About the Speed Art Museum

The Speed Art Museum is Kentucky’s largest art museum. Its mission is to “invite everyone to celebrate art forever.” An independent and encyclopedic museum located on the campus of the University of Louisville. In 1927, Louisville philanthropist Hattie Bishop Speed founded the Speed Art Museum, with a belief in the power of art to change people’s lives.

The Speed Art Museum is free on Sunday through March of 2021, thanks in part to Brown-Forman. After Hours @ the Speed events draw large and diverse crowds every third Friday of the month with music, drinks, and of course art. For more information, visit [www.speedmuseum.org/events-programs](http://www.speedmuseum.org/events-programs).

The Speed’s current exhibition is [Ebony G. Patterson…while the dew is still on the roses…](http://www.speedmuseum.org/exhibitions). More information at [www.speedmuseum.org/exhibitions](http://www.speedmuseum.org/exhibitions).

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