For Immediate Release

December 17, 2013

**The Object Tells a Story: African-American Folk Art from Florida**
January 17 – February 28, 2014

Flagler College and the Crisp-Ellert Art Museum are pleased to announce a new exhibition, *The Object Tells a Story: African American Folk Art from Florida*, opening on January 20, 2014. Related programs will include a lecture by Dr. Kristin Congdon, Professor Emerita, Philosophy and Humanities, University of Central Florida, entitled “Southern African American Folk Art: Recycling, Resistance, and Resilience,” on Thursday, January 23, at 7pm. The lecture will take place in the Gamache-Koger Theater, Ringhaver Student Center at 50 Sevilla Street.

*The Object Tells a Story* brings together a selection of works by four well-known African American vernacular artists from Florida: Alyyne Harris, Mary Proctor, Ruby C. Williams and Purvis Young. Interspersed throughout the exhibition will be objects lent by members of St. Augustine’s African American community, including paintings, quilts, dolls and ceramics, along with artworks created by students from Ketterlinus and Osceola Elementary Schools during recent workshops with Ruby C. Williams at Fort Mose Historic State Park. Recorded interviews as well as written statements by each community lender will be displayed alongside their chosen objects.

While neither Harris, Proctor, Williams or Young undertook professional arts training, each has found their way into the annals of American art. Making use of available resources, house paint or acrylic on plywood, canvas or discarded doors, scraps of wood, fabric and other detritus found around the house and yard, the works they create demonstrate an inherent narrative quality, as do many objects that are considered to be “folk” or "vernacular" art. As such these works touch on subjects from religion and history, race and urban development, to joy and death.

The works included in the exhibition contain stories that reflect both personal truths and collective histories and highlight a sense of community. Objects by better-known artists will provide an historical and cultural context for folk art, through which visitors can experience and explore how the rich cultural heritage of St. Augustine’s African American community plays a vital role in the larger framework of the history of African Americans in the South.

By illuminating and celebrating the ties between what is widely held as “folk art“ and the objects and artworks lent by St. Augustinians, we hope to create a lasting conversation about the significance of objects – individually and collectively, intimately or within a museum setting. Further, we hope that these broader questions and the objects themselves resonate with museum visitors and other groups of disparate backgrounds. Through the participatory aspect of this exhibition, we aim to redefine the space of the museum by making it a site more actively engaged with generating a dialogue about community, history, and art.

*The Object Tells a Story: African-American Folk Art from Florida* exhibition is part of the Journey: 450 Years of the African-American Experience Passport Program created by the City of St. Augustine and the St. Augustine 450th Commemoration. The Journey Passport Program is
designed to connect visitors and residents with important African-American exhibitions, programs and historic sites in St. Augustine and the surrounding area. Many of the venues, including the Crisp-Ellert Art Museum, offer complimentary passport stamps to memorialize the visit. For more information, visit www.Journey2014.com.

This exhibition has been generously supported by a grant from The Community Foundation of Northeast Florida. Further in-kind support has been provided by the City of St. Augustine and Fort Mose Historic State Park.

For further information on the exhibition and related programs, please visit the website at www.flagler.edu/crispellert, or contact Julie Dickover at 904-826-8530 or crispellert@flagler.edu.

“Ideas and Images: Scholars and Artists in Residence” features an international composition of artists and authors, introducing a fresh and creative component to the greater St. Augustine community. Each event is free and open to the public. Call (904) 819-6282 or visit www.flagler.edu/our-community for more information. If you are a person with a disability and need reasonable accommodations, please contact Lynn Francisco at 904-819-6460. Sign Language Interpreters are available upon request with a minimum of three days’ notice.