



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Westmoreland Museum of American Art and the LVR-Industriemuseum, Oberhausen, Germany,
Building a Transatlantic Bridge

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GREENSBURG, PA, Dec. 3, 2009 – The Westmoreland Museum of American Art is pleased to announce *Building a Transatlantic Bridge*, an innovative project that will provide opportunities for collaboration and interaction for high school students in the Greensburg Salem School District and in Oberhausen, Germany.

The Westmoreland wrote and received a grant from Museums and Community Collaborations Abroad (MCCA), a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State in partnership with the American Association of Museums (AAM).

Through this project, students from both regions will have the opportunity to create lasting bonds and cultural understanding, using current technology with a focus on the art, music and industrial heritage of the Pittsburgh and Ruhr Valley regions.

The Westmoreland has worked with the LVR-Industriemuseum for the past three years through its exhibition *Born of Fire: The Valley of Work*, which had its European debut in Oberhausen in 2007 before traveling to Chemnitz, Germany, and Zabrze, Poland. Portions of *Born of Fire* will be featured again at LVR from July 25 through Nov. 28, 2010, as part of Ruhr Region's designation as the 2010 European Capital of Culture. This finale exhibition prompted the two museums to try to bring together students from their regions.

Judith Hansen O'Toole, Director/CEO of the Westmoreland Museum of American Art, noted: "We are excited to be working once again with our colleagues at the LVR-Industriemuseum to bring students and educators together around the theme of art and industry. Based on our collection of paintings that record images of Pittsburgh steel as seen through the eyes of some of our nation's most talented artists, this project between German and American schools will enhance a better understanding of our shared industrial past and how it impacts who we are as an international society today."



Teachers and students from Greensburg Salem High School, and teachers and students in Heinrich-Böll-Gesamtschule, Gymnasium Gustav-Heinemann-Schulzentrum, and Freiherr-vom Stein-Gymnasium in Germany will benefit from the program. Students will identify steelmaking as the major 20th century industry of southwestern Pennsylvania and the Ruhr Valley, and reasons for the decline of steelmaking in each region, and be able to state how each region has adapted to these changes.

Because the project is fully funded, the schools incur no out-of-pocket costs. As part of the grant funds, The Westmoreland will provide Greensburg Salem High School teachers with the necessary technology equipment and software, including audio/video recording devices and digital cameras, access to teacher and student blog sites, social media sites for students and teachers, web-conferencing capabilities, and lesson planning assistance. The Westmoreland has also provided the schools with *Born of Fire* books, music compact discs ("Songs of Steel and Industry" by the NewLanders), and The Westmoreland's DVD documentary, "How Pittsburgh Built a Nation."

Katie Barnard, Director of Education & Visitor Services at The Westmoreland, is acting as liaison between students and teachers in Oberhausen and at Greensburg Salem High School. She has been working closely with Stephanie Buchholz (Education Director at the LVR-Industriemuseum in Oberhausen). Like Barnard, Buchholz is working with teachers in Germany.

The two museum education directors have paired Greensburg Salem teachers with their counterparts overseas. The teachers have been communicating via e-mail and developed the idea of the *Transatlantic Journal Project*, which combines the creative writing classes and advanced art classes. The journal project's web site is <http://transatlanticjournalproject.shutterfly.com/>. On the site, journals and pictures from the students are posted.

Participating from Greensburg Salem High School are the classes of Lisa Bevington, an advanced creative writing teacher, and Kelley Audia, advanced art and portfolio prep teacher. The journals, according to Bevington, provide an "energy and an opportunity like I've never seen in the classroom." The journals are being sent to students in Germany, while those students will in turn send theirs to Greensburg Salem students. They will add onto each other's journals. Images from all journals will be placed on the web site. Barnard will travel to Germany the week of Dec. 7 to meet with Buchholz and other museum staff, as well as teachers and students from the three schools in Oberhausen. Barnard and a Greensburg educator will also travel to Germany twice during the project and Buchholz will reciprocate. All travel is funded through the grant.



"The journals are contagious. It's like looking at a yearbook. The students are very proud of the work that they do. There is pressure because they have an audience," said Audia, adding the faculty and parents are also getting involved in journaling for the project. The students have the option to use their name, though some prefer anonymity.

Bevington said the project gave her something new in the curriculum to be excited about. Audia said the project is a model for other schools, and views it as "the most successful in the classroom this year."

Barnard said: "In Oberhausen, we will work on connecting our technology for the project and I will get to tour the LVR-Industriemuseum and see some German industrial sites. Part of the beauty of the project is that I didn't come up with lessons. The teachers did. I presented the teachers with this opportunity to make a connection, and challenged them to fit it into their existing curriculum. They developed their own ideas and lessons that were very creative and innovative. The project fit very well with art and creative writing."

A teaching model based on the project will be developed for use by other teachers to tie related activities and the idea of international partnerships in with mandated curricula.

Central to the exchange for participants is the creation of a central blog using free, open-source publishing tools. The blog serves as the primary platform for highlighting new achievements and illustrating project activities. Postings may come from MCCA staff, project staff, students and teachers, and/or community participants. See <http://buildingatransatlanticbridge.blogspot.com>.

Building a Transatlantic Bridge will continue through the end of 2010. The project begins in earnest in January and there will be many other lessons and projects developed by educators, including opportunities for public participation.

About LVR-Industriemuseum

Much like Pittsburgh and its surrounding regions, Oberhausen is located in Germany's Ruhr Valley, which is renowned for industry. The people who worked in the mills shaped both regions' culture and history, and the remnants of the workers' pasts are still visible in the landscape today. The artists that depicted smoky cityscapes in Pittsburgh and in Oberhausen are featured in The Westmoreland's *Born of Fire* exhibitions, as well as in the LVR's exhibition *From the Ruhr Valley to the Steel City*, which was presented at The Westmoreland in the fall 2008. Exhibiting each other's work has created a strong partnership between the museums.

About The Westmoreland

The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, situated 35 miles east of Pittsburgh at 221 N. Main St. in the heart of Greensburg, houses collections featuring artwork by



such celebrated American artists as Winslow Homer, Mary Cassatt and Louis Comfort Tiffany. The Westmoreland captures the American spirit in a way few museums do. See how the American experience is brought to life through the inspired eyes of artists at The Westmoreland. It's the only museum of American art in western Pennsylvania.

General Information

The Westmoreland is open Wednesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and until 9 p.m. on Thursdays. Free parking is available in the lot at the entrance of The Westmoreland. Admittance is a suggested \$5 donation for adults; children under 12 and students with a valid ID are free. Guided tours can be arranged by calling 724/837-1500 ext. 10. Visit our web site for detailed directions and mapping.

Editor's please note: Images are available.

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