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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## Two Major Exhibits Opening at Ohr-O'Keefe in June

Biloxi, MS (June 7, 2004) The Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi unveils two major exhibitions on June 18. "Feast Your Eyes: The Unexpected Beauty of Vegetable Gardens" is the first traveling Smithsonian exhibit to visit the museum, which is an affiliate of the Washington, D.C., institution.

"The Centennial Exhibition: On the Midway, "George Ohr's Journey into a New Century" is a celebration of the final major award ever received by the Mad Potter of Biloxi.

"Feast Your Eyes" opens in the Lila Wallace Gallery, and "On the Midway" opens in the Ohr Gallery. The reception on opening night will include:

- An art talk at 5:30 pm by Synthia King, master gardener and an active volunteer at the Vegetable Garden of the museum's Pleasant Reed House;
- A "Salad Sampler" prepared by museum staff for visitors using greens from the garden and other fresh ingredients;
- Docent tours of "On the Midway";
- Sale of a new commemorative centennial poster for On the Midway, which can be embossed with Ohr's trademark signature; and
- New pewter "Veggie" jewelry, magnets and push-pins available in the gift shop

In one of those "twists" so like Ohr in style and energy, it was the potter himself who twice (once successfully) sent his pottery to the Smithsonian for display. After the 1904 exposition, the Smithsonian accepted a small collection of Ohr's through the efforts of the U.S. Pottery Association. More Ohr works were later donated by James Carpenter, who rediscovered the potter after Hurricane Camille. Now several major Ohr pots are on permanent display on the ground floor of the American History Museum of the Smithsonian on the National Mall. A portrait of Ohr is also in the archives of the National Portrait Gallery; a copy of that portrait will be on display at "On the Midway".

### Feast Your Eyes: The Unexpected Beauty of Vegetable Gardens

Bill Nelson, Senior Curator says, "Throughout history, artists have painted vegetables, writers have waxed poetic about them, and millions of Americans have taken intense pleasure in tending their plants from seed to maturity. However, while growing vegetables for food has a long history in America, vegetables have not always been considered pretty. But this exhibit is truly a feast for the eyes."

Dina O'Sullivan, Art Educator, has planned an art activity for 3rd Saturday Family Day - June 19 - that includes making vegetables out of clay and using them as decorations for pots they will make.

Dora Faison, Curator of the Pleasant Reed House, reports the Reed Garden is full of ripe peppers, tomatoes, beets and more. She says "The Reed Garden is important to the history and legacy of the House because it's an example of the kind of kitchen garden that Pleasant and his wife Georgia had to have to help feed their family of two girls and three boys".

Also, the Smithsonian book of "Feast Your Eyes", 142 pp with many color plates, is available for sale in the gift shop through the run of the exhibit, until July 17.

Coordinated tours of the Feast exhibit and of the Reed House and its Vegetable Garden are available by contacting Dina O'Sullivan, Art Educator, 228.374.5547, ext. 26, [dina@georgeohr.org](mailto:dina@georgeohr.org).

Feast Your Eyes: "The Unexpected Beauty of Vegetable Gardens" was developed by the Smithsonian Institution Horticulture Services Division in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES).

The Centennial Exhibition: On the Midway, George Ohr's Journey into a New Century:

This major new exhibit of the pottery of Ohr celebrates his award of a Silver Medal at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, one of many World's Fairs popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s, with many attended by the master potter. A number of pots never before seen in public will be on exhibit during "On the Midway", including his wide variety of "novelty" items sold for less than a dollar at the Fairs. Novelty items include the legendary "puzzle mug", a puzzle jug, a trick cadogan teapot (inverted pitcher), "Stanhope" jugs with a photograph of a female legend of the 19th century, and Lincoln log house inkwells, to name just a few.

The central theme of "On the Midway" is how Biloxi-born Ohr traveled through sixteen states and visited many World's Fairs as he grew into a world-class ceramic artist at the brink of the international modern art movement. His travels took him into contact with folk potters in the mountains and exposed him as well to the major international art movements of the 1800s and 1900s. Self-taught, self-possessed, and exorbitantly ambitious, Ohr absorbed his experiences and translated them into the extravagant shapes and colors of the creative ceramics that marked the last half of his career.

Featured in the exhibition are the Silver Medal Ohr received in St. Louis as well as souvenir items from that Fair, which was the first World's Fair open to the masses and introduced such American standards as the waffle cone, the hamburger-on-bun, and Dr. Pepper. Also on display for "On the Midway" is an item on loan from local Ohr collectors: a bisque pot marked "Expo Clay 1904". Other pottery featured in the exhibit are many works from the original collection of the late Lola Marion of Biloxi, now in the museum collection, and from those locally who have been collecting for many years as well as just recently.

Curating "On the Midway" are Barbara Ross, Registrar of Collections, and Anna Stanfield, Assistant Curator.

For further information on both exhibits, visit [www.georgeohr.org](http://www.georgeohr.org).

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