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Danforth

Museum of Art

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Elizabeth Awalt at the Danforth Museum of Art New England Currents Exhibit to open February 7, 2007

Framingham, MA— The Danforth Museum of Art is pleased to present *Elizabeth Awalt: Sanctuary of Light* as part of their **New England Currents** series of exhibitions showcasing work by regional artists. The exhibit will be on view in the Danforth Museum of Art's Swartz Gallery from February 7 until March 18, 2007. **An artist's reception is planned for Saturday, February 10, from 5-7 p.m.**

A number of gallery talks are also scheduled. **On Wednesday, February 7, from 12-1 pm** the artist will speak on her work. **On Sunday, March 4 at 3 pm** Alfonso Alonso, PhD, a conservation biologist at the Smithsonian Institution will speak on the migratory habits of the Monarch butterflies.

About the Exhibit Elizabeth Awalt's paintings were inspired by her trip to a butterfly sanctuary high in the Michoacan mountains north of Mexico City. There she found a landscape in flux, alive with Monarchs that had migrated thousands of miles to winter in the rare fir trees that grow there. Awalt's observances of this phenomenon are captured in her visionary landscapes, encompassing metaphors of sexuality and spirituality, and meditating on themes such as birth, life and death. Awalt's paintings celebrate the tangible natural world and its effect on the human spirit. An exhibition catalogue will be available for purchase.

For the Mexicans, the annual migration of the Monarch butterflies is a spiritual event. Each year the butterfly migrations arrive almost exactly upon the day that Mexicans celebrate the Day of the Dead. According to Aztec legend, Monarchs are "the spirits of the dead coming back..." For residents in the small towns and villages near the butterfly sanctuaries, the brilliantly colored orange and black creatures are reminiscent of warriors in full battle dress; their appearance is proof that the fallen may return.

As an artist, Awalt is a visionary, whose work reveals a world gone slightly awry. Much in the tradition of Marsden Hartley and Emily Carr, her early paintings are darkly sensual, filled with a natural disorder. In various applications of paint, both dense and translucent, Awalt's paintings move between dark and light. Images of butterflies breaking free, their flight into a light filled sky offer hope. Completing these most recent paintings against the backdrop of a foreign war, she not only portrays a life force that is dying, but also the consequent return of the soul. These transcendent landscapes explore remembered observations of a transition that is part of nature, one that allows a species to survive.

About the Artist Elizabeth Awalt left her native Baltimore to study painting at Boston College, where she later taught. She received her graduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania and later studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, Maine. She currently lives and works at her home in Concord, MA.

The artist was twice awarded a fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA, as well as artist residencies at the Millay Colony in Austerlitz, NY; the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, NH; and at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, NY. She has been the recipient of a Massachusetts Artists Foundation Fellowship in Painting and an Individual Artist Grant for Painting from the National Endowment for the Arts. She has exhibited widely, both nationally and internationally. Her work appears in numerous permanent collections, including the Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, MA; the Decordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA; the McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, Waltham, MA.

Danforth Museum of Art The Danforth Museum of Art was established thirty years ago in 1975 when a group faculty from Framingham State College, as well as business and community leaders, got together and planned to organize the first fine art museum in the Metro West region of Massachusetts. Today, the Danforth Museum maintains a collection of over 2,500 pieces of American art from 19th and 20th Century. The Danforth Museum is admired for its exhibitions and education programs that connect people to the Museums mission, which is dedicated to the celebration and creation of art. Our New England Currents Series is supported by the Artist's Resource Trust, the NAN Award and Swartz Hardware & Supply, Inc.

General Information The Danforth Museum of Art is located at 123 Union Avenue, Framingham, Massachusetts. The Museum hours are Wednesday and Thursday 12 noon to 7 pm. Friday and Saturday 10 am to 5 pm; and Sunday 12 noon to 5 pm. Museum admission is \$8.00 for adults, \$ 7.00 for students and senior citizens, free for children under 12 and Danforth Museum of Art members.