DeCordova first-ever to host Barbara Norfleet’s *Landscape of War* series

Lincoln, MA, April 8, 2010 – DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum hosts *Barbara Norfleet: Landscapes of War* this summer, May 15-August 29. This is the first-ever presentation of Norfleet’s *The Landscape of War* series. The exhibition will also feature her seminal 1990 portfolio, *Landscapes of the Cold War*, from which her newest series stems, alongside ephemera related to her process and practice.

Koch Curatorial Fellow Lexi Lee says, "Bobbie has been a leading voice in the Boston photo scene for many years. As the Director and Curator of the Photography Collection at the Carpenter Center for thirty years, she helped to establish a photographic archive of American social history. Her passion for collecting and displaying vernacular photography not only spawned an entire institutional collection, but has deeply informed her own practice. This solo show of her work - her first at DeCordova - will bring together some of the main themes of her career, and include works from the museum's collection."

*The Landscape of War* is a group of photo-collages crafted from found, hand-painted photographs of botanical specimens with test prints from her 1990 portfolio that depict high-security, Cold War military sites. She uses the horizontal triptychs to show the life of images as objects that can be reborn and incorporated into new dialogues through juxtaposition. By cropping and collaging her *Cold War* prints with floral postcards, Norfleet opens the work to new contexts and interpretations. The panoramas are at once formal studies, historical records, and meditations on current environmental, ecological, and political issues. Norfleet explores the tension between the art object and the documentary record by merging the longstanding tradition of documentary photography with the contemporary theory and practice of the archive. To better contextualize Norfleet’s new work within her larger practice, the exhibition will include photographs from *Landscapes of the Cold War*—the root of Norfleet’s photo-collages—and ephemera related to her long-term sociological project, *Aesthetics of Defense*.

Norfleet, a long-time Cambridge resident and former professor of sociology and social psychology at Harvard University, established a vernacular image archive of everyday

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Americana to compliment the photography collection at Harvard’s Carpenter Center. Norfleet’s interest in the vernacular propelled her project, the Aesthetics of Defense, to document the Cold War landscape for the Carpenter Center. This work culminated in the black and white photography portfolio, *Landscapes of the Cold War*, in 1990.

Unlike the images propagated by the U.S. government in the 1950s, Norfleet’s photographs from the 1980s expose the reality of sites used during the Cold War. The U.S. had commandeered thousands of miles to establish sites like the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico and the 1350 square mile Nevada Test Site to build, test, and power weapons in the name of national security. Her images capture the crumbling nuclear plants, barren wastelands, and rows of nuclear waste storage containers of these sites thirty years later. Soon after Norfleet began the Aesthetics of Defense project in the late 1980s, *The New York Times* printed an exposé on the degeneration of Cold War era nuclear plants and the hazardous conditions surrounding them. The report provoked a torrent of press surrounding the landscape of the Cold War that led to the closure of many of these sites. The sites today exist as remnants of the nuclear arms race and yet some remain active military bases run by the Department of Defense.

These sites continue to make headlines today. In February 2010 President Obama abandoned the plan to permanently store nuclear waste material at Yucca Mountain in Nevada and backed a proposal to build 7 -10 new nuclear plants. 20 years and $9 billion after building the underground storage site in Nevada, the nuclear waste continues to sit in storage containers as no long-term solution for waste storage has been determined. Seen in relation to the current administration’s nuclear policy and the still undecided fate of nuclear waste storage, Norfleet’s photographs and photocollages are charged with a certain immediacy and a renewed relevance as they are incorporated into new contexts and political arenas.

**About the Artist**

Since the 1960s Barbara Norfleet has taught at Harvard University in the Social Sciences Department and as a Senior Lecturer in Visual and Environmental Studies at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts. She received her BA from Swarthmore College, and her MA and PhD in social relations from Harvard University and Radcliffe College. Norfleet’s works have been widely shown in the United States and Europe, with exhibitions at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; International Center of Photography, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. She is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, a Guggenheim fellowship, and the Aaron Siskind Award. She is an established photography curator as well as the author of *The Illusion of Orderly Progress*, *Looking at Death*, and *The Social Question* among many other titles.

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Her work is included in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of Art, New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London as well as the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum.

**Exhibition Programming**

Educational programs in the Museum will accompany the exhibition, *Barbara Norfleet: Landscapes of War*. The artist will give an Artist Talk at DeCordova on Saturday, June 12 at 3pm in the galleries. Koch Curatorial Fellow Lexi Lee, organizer of the exhibition, will speak on Saturday, June 5. A cell phone audio tour will accompany the exhibition; visitors can listen to Barbara Norfleet provide a first-hand experience of her trips to military bases, describe her creative process, and discuss how her work resonates today. The family program, Eye Wonder, will feature guest artist Keith Johnson on Sunday, August 1. All programs are free with museum admission.

**About DeCordova**

DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum was established in 1950 to educate as broad and diverse a public as possible about American contemporary art. DeCordova’s unique campus features both indoor and outdoor venues, allowing its visitors to celebrate and explore contemporary art across 35 acres. Inside, the Museum features a robust slate of rotating exhibitions and innovative interpretive programming. Outside, DeCordova’s Sculpture Park hosts more than 60 works, the majority of which are on loan to the Museum. DeCordova also offers the largest non-degree granting studio art program in New England. DeCordova Sculpture Park + Museum attracts more than 100,000 visitors from New England and tourists from around the world to its campus each year and enrolls more than 3,000 students of all ages in its studio art program.

**General Information**

DeCordova is open Tuesday through Sunday, from 10am to 5pm and on selected Monday holidays. General admission during Museum hours is $12 for adults; $8 for senior citizens, students, and youth ages 6-12. Children age 5 and under, Lincoln residents, and Active Duty Military Personnel and their dependents are admitted free. The Sculpture Park is open year-round during daylight hours. Guided public tours of the Museum’s main galleries take place every Thursday at 1pm and Sunday at 2pm. Tours of the Sculpture Park are given on Saturday and Sunday at 1pm from May to October. All guided tours are free with Campus admission. Visit www.decordova.org or call 781.259.8355 for further information.

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