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REGIONAL ARTS  
 COMMISSION OF ST. LOUIS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE	CONTACT: Diane Kline Director of Marketing (314) 863-5811 diane@stlrac.org
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## Artist Translates Painful Memories of Childhood in Japanese Internment Camp Into Expressive Art

**Exhibition *Echoes from Manzanar: If the Walls Could Talk* opens at 5:30pm on Friday, August 29 at the Regional Arts Commission**

**ST. LOUIS (August 5, 2008)** Artist **Arthur Towata** has turned his painful and transformative childhood experiences at a Japanese internment camp into expressive art in his traveling exhibition, *Echoes from Manzanar: If the Walls Could Talk*. The exhibit, featuring ceramics and large acrylic paintings on canvas, opens at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, August 29, 2008 at The Gallery at the Regional Arts Commission (RAC).

In 1942, when he was 9 years old, Towata, his mother and younger brother were transported to the Manzanar War Relocation Center, a few hundred miles northeast of Los Angeles at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

His mother tried to protect her sons from the dark reality of the Japanese internment camp and instructed her boys to entertain themselves by exploring the new environment. Encouraged, Towata gathered creatures, rocks and other objects which he used to create imaginative games. Years later, these experiences that shaped his childhood would shape his artwork.



His paintings capture the memories of tar-paper buildings at the camp, translated onto black canvases. In sharp contrast with their dark background are the intricate, brightly colored markings that tell the story of Towata's discoveries: reptiles, stars in the sky, oddly shaped rocks and other camp members.

It was only in 2006 when Towata visited the former camp which is now a national historic site, that he understood the connection between his work and his time at Manzanar. "Upon entering that part of the country I realized the impact that the landscape has played upon my artistic sensibilities," he said. He took one of his small ceramic pots and placed it into the natural rock formations in the mountainous site, and it became part of the land. "It fit perfectly as the one missing puzzle piece you'd been searching for."

(over)

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*Echoes from Manzanar – 1<sup>st</sup> and last add*

The show, which is presented as a tribute not only to his family's experience in the camp but to all those whose lives were forever changed during the internment years, will travel to both the Japanese American Museum in Los Angeles and the museum at Manzanar. It originally opened in 2007 at the Jacoby Arts Center in Alton, IL.

**WHEN:**

**Opening Reception open to public -- Friday, August 29, 2008 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

**Exhibition – Through Sunday, October 12, 2008**

**Gallery Talk – Wednesday, September 24**

**Reception 6:30 p.m.; Talk 7 p.m.**

**Gallery Hours – Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.**

**WHERE:**

The Gallery at the Regional Arts Commission  
6128 Delmar Blvd., St. Louis, MO, 63112  
On the Delmar Loop across from The Pageant  
[www.art-stl.com](http://www.art-stl.com)

Parking available in the lot behind The Pageant;  
some metered street parking available

**INFO:**

Diane Kline (314) 863-5811 x 24 or [Diane@stlrac.org](mailto:Diane@stlrac.org)

**About the Regional Arts Commission**

Founded in 1985, the Regional Arts Commission (RAC) is a cultural catalyst in the St. Louis area, providing financial, technical, promotional and other support for arts organizations. Directed by a board of fifteen commissioners appointed by the chief executives of St. Louis City and County, RAC is a pivotal force in the continuing development and marketing of the arts in the region. Since its inception, RAC has awarded more than 5000 grants totaling \$65 million. In May 2008, 205 of the area's arts organizations, consortiums and cultural programs, large and small, received grant awards totaling more than \$3.6 million, funded by a portion of the hotel/motel room sales tax. RAC's four-story facility including the area's first Cultural Resource Center is located at 6128 Delmar Blvd., St. Louis, Mo., 63112 in the exciting new stretch of The Loop neighborhood. Contact the organization by calling (314) 863-5811 or by visiting [www.art-stl.com](http://www.art-stl.com).

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