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**Palo Alto Art Center Presents New Installation by Mildred Howard
Opening Sept. 10 at King Plaza in Palo Alto**

**Bay Area Sculptor's *Clear Story* is Second Site-Specific Work featured
by the Center During its Transformation**

Palo Alto, CA, July 27, 2011 – The acclaimed Palo Alto Art Center will present *Clear Story*, a new temporary site-specific installation by Bay Area artist Mildred Howard, opening September 10 and on view through August, 2012 at King Plaza in front of Palo Alto City Hall. The walk-in scale piece engages viewers in the artist's striking re-imagining of traditional bottle houses of West Africa and the American South that form part of her exploration of her own and America's historical, artistic, cultural and spiritual heritage. Tying the installation to the architectural and social roots of the Palo Alto community, Howard has drawn inspiration from iconic Eichler houses that are hallmarks of many of the area's neighborhoods. There will be a conversation with the artist Saturday, September 10, at 3 pm in City Hall Council Chambers, followed by a reception in City Hall lobby at 4 pm. *Clear Story* is part of the Palo Alto Art Center's *On the Road* programs that take the Center's activities into the community during its year-long closure for a \$7.9 million transformation with re-opening in the summer of 2012. For more information, visit www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter.

Clear Story represents a large-scale, monumental bottle house, temporarily sited at the King Plaza. The structure will be approximately 12 feet wide, 14 feet long, 10 feet high. The work features thousands of intimately scaled bottles, fused together and then assembled in a wood armature. Like all of Howard's bottle houses, *Clear Story* will explore the unique quality of glass to reflect and refract light, drawing on her long experience as a science educator at San Francisco's Exploratorium. In West African and Southern culture, bottle houses were often created to protect either the grave or the home against bad spirits and to retain and shelter good spirits. For Howard, bottle houses are part of a centuries-old tradition and reflect a career-long interest in respecting and honoring her ancestors.

Mildred Howard views the role of the artist as that of a storyteller. In telling her

stories, she draws upon images that are shaped by memory, history, family, identity and place. Her artwork often features found objects and photographs as well as personal memorabilia.

A Bay Area native, Howard was born in San Francisco in 1945 and moved to Berkeley in 1947. Her parents were respected and influential activists. Through her artwork, teaching, and community involvement, Howard continues her parent's legacy of social activism, championing equal rights and free speech for all. Howard is an accomplished artist whose work has been featured in exhibitions at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC and the New Museum in New York and is included in the collections of the Oakland Museum of California, the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Washington and the San Jose Museum of Art.

The installation will be on view for a year.

About the Palo Alto Art Center Transformation

The nationally acclaimed Palo Alto Art Center temporarily closed its doors to the public on April 4, 2011 through the summer of 2012 to undergo a substantial \$7.9 million transformation of its facilities and re-envisioning of its extensive programs in order to serve a broader public in its mission to engage the community in the arts as both observers and creators through exhibitions, studio arts and education activities.

"The renovation of the Palo Alto Art Center facility is an opportunity for us to reflect on our mission and programs, and to re-envision how we can better serve the community that has engaged with us for 40 years in the seeing and making of art of all kinds," says Karen Kienzle, Palo Alto Art Center Director. "During this time our public programming will continue, and we are excited about bringing exhibitions and participatory activities for all ages directly into the community while we ready the Center itself to welcome more of the public next year."

The Palo Alto Art Center's transformation is inspired by the Center's mission to engage the community in the creative process as both observers and creators through exhibitions and studio and education programs. The transformation will enable the Palo Alto Art Center to expand its programs and services to a broader base while maintaining its high level of quality and enhance its reputation as a leading regional art center.

The Palo Alto Art Center has been one of the country's most popular and unusual facilities since it opened its doors to the public in 1971. Serving 70,000 residents

annually, it combines both an internationally acclaimed exhibitions program with studio art, art instruction in painting, drawing, ceramics, glass, media arts, extensive art activities for school children including *Project LOOK!*, publications and a variety of public events including lectures, interpretive programs and meet-the-artist opportunities.

***On the Road* Events Bring Palo Alto Art Center's "See and Make" Approach into the Community During the Transformation**

During the transformation, Bay Area residents will be able to continue to discover, learn, create and be inspired by participating in its innovative *On the Road* programs that will bring the Center's popular and acclaimed "see and make" approach to the arts directly into the community. *On the Road* will continue during the Center's transformation with a variety of activities throughout Palo Alto.

On the Road events are designed to give the public opportunities to see art in exhibitions and site-specific art installations, and to make art in a variety of participatory classes, demonstrations and programs for all ages. In addition to Mildred Howard's *Clear Story*, current and upcoming *On the Road* activities will include the Art Center's new Art Truck at locations throughout the community, *Double Take*, Patrick Dougherty's beguiling environmental sculpture made of willow branches, on the grounds of the Center at the corner of Embarcadero and Newell Road through July, 2012; kids' art studio at Palo Alto Celebrates the Arts, August 27 and 28; 16th annual Great Glass Pumpkin Patch September 27-October 2 at Rinconada Park; Diwali celebration October 7 at the Palo Alto Children's Library; third annual Day of the Dead celebration October 30 at Lucie Stern Community Center; Holiday Family Day and Cubberley Artists' Open House December 3 at Cubberley Community Center; art classes at various locations in Palo Alto and more. A regularly updated schedule of *On the Road* events may be found at www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter .

On the Road programs are supported by the Palo Alto Art Center Foundation through an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant. Detailed architectural drawings of the Mildred Howard's concept have been contributed by Anderson Anderson Architects, San Francisco. *Clear Story* is also co-sponsored by the Palo Alto Art Commission.