

PRESS RELEASE

Noted Political Figures Focus on Art

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(Jackson, Miss) Former Tennessee Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr. and former Mississippi Governor Ray Mabus share more than a love of politics. Both are also skilled photographers whose broad experiences and artistic aesthetics have resulted in fascinating works featured in the Mississippi Museum of Art's new exhibition *Life through the Lens: Photographs by Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr. and Governor Ray Mabus*. The exhibition opens July 5 and runs through September 7.

Life through the Lens follows *Breathing Art*, which highlighted the mother/daughter artistry of Myra Green and Lynn Green Root of Jackson.

"Part of our goal in creating our new museum space was to give us more flexibility to accommodate a wide range of artists' works, including regional artists," said Mississippi Museum of Art Director Betsy Bradley. "Like *Breathing Art*, *Life through the Lens* will have a broad appeal."

More than 65,000 visitors have toured the new museum since it opened in May 2007.

Baker is senior counsel and Mabus is a former shareholder in the law firm of Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC, and *Life through the Lens* is made possible through the Firm's support.

"This exhibition is a reflection of the multi-faceted talent, interest and knowledge these two outstanding statesmen share," said William S. Painter, managing shareholder of the Firm's Jackson office. "Each, in his own photographic style, portrays his subjects with the truth, dignity, and respect that have defined their long and celebrated political careers."

During his 18 years in the U.S. Senate, Baker served as both minority and majority leader. He served as President Ronald Reagan's Chief of Staff from 1987 to 1988 and as Ambassador to Japan under President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2005. He gained national recognition in 1973 as vice chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee. In addition he was a Republican candidate for the U. S. Presidency in 1980 and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the prestigious Jefferson Award for public service and the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Paulownia Flowers, Japan's highest honor for civilians.

Prior to being elected Mississippi's Governor in 1987, Mabus served as chief assistant to Mississippi Governor William F. Winter from 1980 to 1984 and state auditor from 1983 to 1987. Following his term as Governor, he was appointed Ambassador to Saudi Arabia by President Bill Clinton. In 1990, Mabus received the Social Change Responsibility Award from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change.

"While both men are highly recognized for their public service," said Bradley, "they have also received considerable acclaim for their accomplishments behind the camera. This exhibition offers viewers an opportunity to compare and contrast the individual interests and aesthetic approaches of each."

Senator Baker's adventures with a camera began at age 12 as a Boy Scout. His subjects are as fascinating as they are diverse. They encompass fellow members of Congress and many presidents; the heads of various foreign states; the broad range of people and places in Washington, D.C.; and the glorious, unspoiled natural

vistas of his native state. Baker's carefully composed images, whether examining a bird or flower or fixing a distant, misty landscape, underscore his mastery of the camera. Though he has often worked in black and white, he is, perhaps, most widely recognized for his rich color images. Senator Baker has remarked that “. . . photographs that appeal to me are straightforward and simple and direct,” and that “photography . . . may be the only place where I can reasonably aspire to perfection.” His photographs have been exhibited across the United States and in Japan, and he enjoyed a solo showing at the Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 2007. His work has appeared in *Life* magazine, *National Geographic*, and the books *Howard Baker's Washington*, *Scott's Bluff* and *Big South Fork Country*.

Governor Mabus also became interested in photography in his youth. As a teenager, he accompanied his father on numerous trips abroad, and his camera went with him. His prints in this exhibition reflect a continuing interest in international travels and capture the exotic and the unfamiliar from Cambodia to Turkey and from the Caribbean to Egypt. His color images depict various aspects of the landscape, indigenous flora and fauna, intriguing local architecture, as well as the endless array of people he encounters on his journeys. Favoring a capture-the-moment approach in his work, Mabus looks for the unexpected and spontaneous and endeavors to relay through the photographs an immediate response.

Governor Mabus says that one reason why he takes photographs is “. . . to make myself look at things in a close and careful way and try to see things and people in more detail than I otherwise would. . . . My father always carried a camera on trips with him. He owned the hardware store in Ackerman, Mississippi, and had an insatiable curiosity about the world and took me pretty much everywhere before I finished college.”

Governor Mabus's photographs have been the subject of a number of previous solo exhibitions, including shows at the Meridian House, Washington, D.C., and Rockefeller Center, New York City.

“Life through the Lens is the kind of exhibition that opens museum doors to a new category of visitors who may never have had an interest in art or who may not have been compelled to visit us before,” said Bradley. “We welcome both new friends and old to *Life through the Lens* and look forward to sharing not only this remarkable exhibition, but also the regional cultural treasure that is the Mississippi Museum of Art.”

The Mississippi Museum of Art and its programs are sponsored in part by the city of Jackson and the Jackson Convention & Visitors Bureau. Support is also provided in part by funding from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a state agency, and in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

For more information about this and other exhibitions and programs, hours and admission, contact the Mississippi Museum of Art at 601.960.1515 or 1.866.VIEW ART.