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Media Contacts:

Kelly Helton, kelly.helton@brooksmuseum.org

Alli Steinberg, Polskin Arts | alli.steinberg@finnpartners.com

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MEMPHIS ART MUSEUM ANNOUNCES CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP WITH ARTS COUNCIL KOREA, TO INCLUDE A MAJOR EXHIBITION AND A CURATORIAL EXCHANGE

HOOKS BROTHERS STUDIO: FRAMING MEMPHIS'S BLACK SOUND
SHOWCASES HOW MEMPHIS BECAME A FOUNDATIONAL CITY IN AMERICAN
MUSIC HISTORY WITH IMAGES OF ICONIC MUSICIANS B. B. KING, BILLIE
HOLIDAY, COUNT BASIE, MAHALIA JACKSON, AL GREEN, AND MORE

ON VIEW IN SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA, OCTOBER 16 – OCTOBER 31, 2025

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (October 14, 2025) – [Memphis Art Museum](#), a U.S. Southeast cultural center opening in 2026, today announced details of a new cultural partnership with **Arts Council Korea (ARKO)**. The collaboration will launch with the opening of an exhibition, ***Hooks Brothers Studio: Framing Memphis's Black Sound***, on view at the ARKO Art Center Open Space in Seoul, South Korea from October 16–October 31, 2025. This marks the first international presentation of works from the renowned Hooks Brothers Studio archive—75,000 photographs that are a promised gift to Memphis Art Museum and the National Civil Rights Museum. Featuring images of legendary Black musicians captured in Memphis between 1920 and 1979, the show includes portraits of Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Nat D. Williams, Al Green, B. B. King, W.C. Handy, Mahalia Jackson, and others. It is accompanied by a soundtrack curated by the Memphis Listening Lab.

Memphis, a historic and culturally rich city in the southeastern United States located on the Mississippi River, is world-famous for its music—blues, soul, and rock ‘n’ roll—and for its role in the American civil rights movement. The Hooks Brothers Studio, located on iconic Beale Street, is recognized as one of the most significant Black-owned photography studios of the early 20th century. Celebrated for its documentation of Black life, excellence, and joy in the American South, the studio provided a powerful counter-narrative during a time when such representations were uncommon in mass media. For 73 years, the Hooks Brothers Studio developed a rich and nuanced portrait of Memphis, chronicling everything from well-known stars at high-profile events to everyday occurrences of middle- and working-class Memphians. Following its presentation in Seoul, the exhibition will travel to at least **one additional venue in Asia**, to be announced at a later date.

“We are thrilled to share these remarkable works—powerful testaments to American musical

and photographic history—on a global stage,” said Dr. Zoe Kahr, Executive Director of Memphis Art Museum. “This partnership with Arts Council Korea marks the beginning of a long-term cultural exchange that will build lasting connections, showcase Memphis to the world, and welcome the world to Memphis.”

The exhibition is organized by Memphis Art Museum and curated by C. Rose Smith, Assistant Curator of Photography. Memphis Art Museum board trustees Andrea Herenton and Rodney Herenton made a promised gift of the Hooks Brothers Studio archive to the museum, in collaboration with the National Civil Rights Museum. A large-scale exhibition from the collection will be presented jointly across the two museums as part of the inaugural exhibition program of the highly-anticipated Memphis Art Museum.

“This partnership between Arts Council Korea and Memphis Art Museum will connect two communities with deep artistic traditions. We are building new pathways for audiences to experience an exchange of culture—through exhibitions, special events, educational programs – and expanding this work to a region of the United States that is not as well known to many Koreans, but of critical importance to the deep friendship between South Korea and the United States,” said Dr. Byoung Gug Choung, Chairperson, Arts Council Korea.

In addition, the Memphis Art Museum and Arts Council Korea announced their intention to develop a three-year partnership that will bring emerging Korean curatorial talent to the Southeastern U.S. to learn more about its museums, collections, and culture. The Memphis Art Museum will host each curator, developing an itinerary tailored to their specific research interests. Curators may elect to travel to additional U.S. states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio or South Carolina, as well as other cities in Tennessee.

“We are thrilled to launch this curatorial exchange between Arts Council Korea and Memphis Art Museum. The Southeast is a dynamic cultural region and ARKO is excited to support Korean curators who will both share Korean culture, and bring back the rich culture of this important U.S. region to Korea,” said Byungeun Yoo, Director of International Relations and Partnerships, Arts Council Korea.

These initiatives mark a significant step in advancing international cultural exchange and expanding the global reach of Memphis Art Museum, a groundbreaking new platform, reshaping the artistic landscape of the Southeast. It is made possible in part through the support of the museum’s **Global Council**—a network of national and international leaders dedicated to strengthening cultural ties and positioning Memphis on the world stage.

About Memphis Brooks Museum of Art / Memphis Art Museum

In late 2026, the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art will open its new home as Memphis Art Museum: a state-of-the-art, 122,000-square-foot facility at the heart of downtown Memphis. Founded in 1916 as the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, it is home to over 10,000 works of art with important holdings in European painting, American photography, and contemporary African Diasporic art.

For more information on the current programming and future plans for Memphis’ art museum, call (901) 544-6200 or visit brooksmuseum.org / memphisartmuseum.org.

About Arts Council Korea

Arts Council Korea (ARKO), a public institution under the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, was established in 1973 to support the creation of Korea's arts ecosystem and to make arts and culture accessible to the public. ARKO operates Korea's leading cultural and arts platforms including the ARKO·Daehakro Arts Theater, ARKO Art Center, ARKO Arts Archive and the Korean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. ARKO is committed to establishing global partnerships to increase cultural exchange and collaboration. Learn more at www.arko.or.kr/eng/ and follow us on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

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