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Media Contact:

Lori Geller
The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum
773/755-5108

lgeller@naturemuseum.org

***Seashells Explores the Primal Beauty of Malacology
Art Exhibition at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum Begins November 6***

CHICAGO (October 26, 2009) – Over the past five years, Chicago artist Helen Oh has collected and painted dozens of shells, compelled by their primal beauty, symbolic meaning and architectural structure. In 2008, she toured and painted from the Chicago Academy of Sciences' Malacology Collection, featuring specimens collected during the last 150 years. Oh's paintings and drawings of shells will be on display at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum beginning November 6 in *Seashells: Inspired Form Paintings by Helen Oh*.

The exhibition showcases Oh's various artistic techniques—oils, gouache and graphite. Thirty-four paintings and drawings depict the intricate detail and three-dimensional nature of the rarest shells, including a three-horned fresh water clam shell from Michigan, a 9-inch giant scallop shell and microscopic slipper shells.

In an effort to articulate the unique qualities of shells, Oh paints and draws them at a scale much larger than their actual sizes. The result, she said, is an abstract sculpture which resembles surfaces from marble to human skin.

"It's important that people see the beauty and depth of these shells," said Oh, who is concerned by studies that predict that large amounts of carbon dioxide absorbed in the ocean make it difficult for shell forming animals to survive. "I hope my work educates the public about the environmental issues that surround the lives of these exotic and mysterious creatures."

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Alvaro Ramos, director of exhibits at the Nature Museum, said *Seashells* is a unique exhibition because it brings to light the Academy's extensive Malacology Collection.

"Because we house our Collections off-site, the public doesn't often get a chance to view the Academy's rare and exotic specimens," Ramos said. "Helen Oh did a magnificent job capturing the intricate patterns and forms of each individual shell, and we hope this exhibition will further the public interest in malacology, and bring awareness to our Collections."

Seashells, which includes 34 paintings and drawings, will be on display at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum November 6, 2009 through January 31, 2010. Admission to the Museum, including special exhibitions, is \$9/adult, \$6/child 3-12, \$7/seniors and students. Thursdays are suggested donation days. Located at 2430 North Cannon Drive in Chicago's Lincoln Park, the Museum is open weekends from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.naturemuseum.org or call 773-755-5100.

Photos available upon request:

1. Helmet Shell, by Helen Oh
2. Still Life with Pearl Necklace, by Helen Oh

About the Artist

Helen Oh is a visual artist, educator, and conservator of art. Originally from Seoul, South Korea, she studied painting at the School of Visual Arts, the National Academy of Design, and Art Students League. Oh has taught studio art courses at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the New York Academy of Art and the Lino School of Art in Umbria, Italy. Since 2001, she has taught drawing and design courses at Harrington College of Design.

She is a recipient of two Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grants, and has exhibited at the Terra Museum of American Art, National Academy of Design Museum, Butler Institute of American Art, and the Fort Wayne Museum of Art. Her artwork has been featured in New American Paintings# 29, Art Scene Chicago 2000, House Beautiful, Chicago Magazine, The Chicago Reader, and American Artist magazine. Chicago Public Radio (WBEZ) interviewed her in connection with conservation of artwork damaged by Hurricane Katrina. To view her paintings and future projects, visit www.ohandconklin.com.

About the Chicago Academy of Sciences and its Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

The Chicago Academy of Sciences and its Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum inspire people to learn about and care for nature and the environment. The Academy, founded in 1857, improves the quality of life in Chicago and the region by delivering superior environmental and science education programs to students and teachers, by offering Museum exhibitions and conducting public programs, that foster green living, and by restoring local ecosystems and advancing scientific knowledge through collections and research.

During the past 10 years, the Chicago Academy of Sciences has welcomed more than 1.8 million visitors to its Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum. The Museum provides hands-on exhibitions and programs to 70,000 students annually and trains and provides resources for more than 1,700 Chicago teachers in over 430 schools. The Museum engages visitors, especially urban dwellers, in new ways to connect with and preserve the natural world through a unique indoor/outdoor experience. It is one of the city's best examples of eco-friendly building technology with lush outdoor nature trails and habitat, green roof, rain barrels and solar panels.