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**“ALLIED AGAINST AIDS: SUE COE’S AIDS PORTFOLIO”
PRESENTED BY THE
POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART**

“Allied Against AIDS: Sue Coe’s *AIDS Portfolio*” will be on view **September 2 through December 19, 2014**, at the Pomona College Museum of Art (330 N. College Avenue, Claremont).

“Allied Against AIDS: Sue Coe’s *AIDS Portfolio*” will have a **public reception on Saturday, September 6, from 5-7 p.m.** Artist **Sue Coe** will present a public lecture on **Thursday, October 23, at 7 p.m.** in the College’s Smith Campus Center (170 E. Sixth St., Claremont), Room 208, with a book signing and reception to follow at the Pomona College Museum of Art. Exhibition curator Benjamin Kersten, Pomona Class of 2015, will give an exhibition talk on **Thursday, November 6, at 7 p.m.**

Drawn from the permanent collection of the Pomona College Museum of Art, this exhibition showcases the work of “graphic witness” Sue Coe. “Allied Against AIDS: Sue Coe’s *AIDS Portfolio*” presents ten etchings by Coe addressing the harrowing impact of AIDS.

Packaged in a paper wrapper emblazoned with a red biohazard symbol, one finds, not the danger suggested by the symbol, but portraits of five men in the final stages of life with AIDS. All made with the sitter’s permission, the portraits are accompanied by simple titles and texts, which focus on personal events and stories rather than cast her subjects as abstractions. Through drawing, Coe could respect the privacy of hospital patients, and she shared images with them prior to publication, offering to discard those that they felt trespassed on their privacy or dignity. The titles and bits of text make visible an America facing calamity and concealed by socially conservative political discourse.

The portfolio also includes images of the populated clinic, interactions between doctors and patients, and the cough that was misleadingly rumored to transmit AIDS. By combining the sensationalist images of the AIDS scare with images of suffering, and steadfast and caring relationships, Coe fights assumptions about AIDS by appealing to a universal humanity. Coe combats societal fear and indifference about AIDS by portraying and preserving the names, voices and experiences of some of those most affected.

AIDS Portfolio resulted from Coe’s 1994 visit to Galveston Hospital’s Infectious Disease Unit to dramatize the extent of the AIDS pandemic, at the invitation of Dr. Eric Avery. Having

experienced the trauma of HIV in New York City's arts community, Coe turned her artist's gaze, full of both anger and compassion, toward the health crisis devastating the country.

The year that Coe visited Galveston, Texas, AIDS became the leading cause of death for Americans ages 25 to 44. People with AIDS suffered not only from the biological effects of the immune deficiency syndrome but also from the stigma of the disease and resulting social isolation. Despite the evidence of AIDS in non-homosexual communities, conservative politicians and religious leaders branded AIDS as a sickness of gay men and intravenous drug users, using the rhetoric of public health policy to further isolate those populations.

Throughout her 30-year career as a painter, visual essayist, illustrator, educator, and, above all, social critic, Coe has tenaciously united politics and art. She injects her art with a realist point of view and fierce social and political commentary. Coe explores the effects of capitalism and governmental indifference with unabashed moral conviction and an affinity for the oppressed. Through her work in a range of media—books, prints, and paintings—she has tackled issues such as war, factory farming and animal rights, environment degradation, and pressures on global populations.

Born in 1951 to a working-class family in Tamsworth, England, Coe pursued a career in art, studying at London's Royal College of Art and the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, ultimately completing her M.A. independently in New York. Evoking Francisco Goya's commentary on the cruelty and suffering of war in the early 19th century and that of Käthe Kollwitz in the 20th century, Coe's work maintains the raw, realist viewpoint of a witness. Coe has done many projects, from *Porkopolis* (1989) to the more recent *Cruel* (2011), on animal rights, looking at how factory farming harms animals, the environment, and global populations. Other works comment on the tragedies of war. Coe also returned to Galveston for a project on women in prison with HIV. Throughout her work, Coe maintains a fierce mission as an artist: "to let some disinfectant of daylight into what is being concealed."

The exhibition is organized by Benjamin Kersten (Pomona '15), Josephine Bump '76 Curatorial Intern.

About Pomona College Museum of Art

The Pomona College Museum of Art is located at 330 N. College Avenue, Claremont. The Museum is open to the public free of charge Tuesday through Sunday, from noon to 5 p.m., and Thursday, from noon to 11 p.m. For more information, call (909) 621-8283 or visit the museum's Website: www.pomona.edu/museum.

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