

Project 3: Empowered by Artistry

The Sewall-Belmont House and Museum is proud to partner with a new collaboration of arts organizations dedicated to social justice issues, who are making a difference for women, both locally and globally, through individual creativity and fine arts.

The **Treasure Postcards Project, by Arts for Global Development, Inc.** consists of contributions from visual artists from across the globe, expressing social and economic issues with postcard-sized artworks. The educational and informative medium creates awareness on vital developmental issues, provokes thoughts, inspires, and helps raise funds for charitable causes. First launched in 2006, the aim was to emphasize the role of arts in the economic development field and highlight the significance of protecting humankind's major cultural heritage sites and artistic creations. Over 100 artwork images of 45 artists from 26 countries were received and selected works were exhibited in Washington, D.C. focusing on issues such as artistic individuality, education, poverty, gender, HIV/AIDS, environment, peace, or humanity in conjunction with cultural identity and preservation. In 2008, the project was launched again, this time with donated works of female artists emphasizing girls and women's issues including health concerns, socio-economic challenges, civil rights, and more. Over 80 artists from around the world have donated works that raised funds for two women's shelters addressing issues around domestic violence and helping women who have become victims of such cruelty. The beneficiary, from the sales proceeds of the TreasurePostcards exhibit at the Sewall-Belmont House, is the *Brighter Tomorrow for Africa Foundation* [www.brighterafrica.org] that works to help women, girls, and children in Sierra Leone.

La Femme: the Feminine is part of the Making Herstory Exhibition Series, produced by Authentic Art Consulting and the ThickArt Collaborative, who have brought together a group of talented local women artists to comment on the softness and power of women. The artwork submitted for this exhibition reflects women's strength through a feminine lens. The work that is included represents the diversity of women, with no regard to the artists' resumes, demographic backgrounds or mediums used. In fact, some of the artists have limited exhibition experience. This section also includes submissions from established artists in the area, which provides a nice mix of work for viewing pleasure.

Girls Gotta Run, Inc., located in Washington, D.C., focuses on issues surrounding Ethiopian girls. Ethiopian girls' *enrollment in school is among the lowest in the world*. Women and girls in Ethiopia are *more likely to die in childbirth*, due to early marriage, *than reach sixth grade*. Ethiopia has the *highest rate of vaginal fistulas*, a tearing of the vagina during childbirth that requires painful reconstructive surgery, often unavailable, in the world. Ethiopia has *one of the largest caseloads of AIDS*, forcing many girls to quit school to care for sick or widowed relatives. Parents, desperate for dowry payments, sometimes sell *girls as young as 12* into marriage. There is hope, however, for girls in Ethiopia. Today, seven of the 10 top-earning athletes in Ethiopia are women, so many girls and their parents have begun to see running professionally as a viable career option. Girls who train are more likely to stay in school. Girls who stay in school are better able to improve their own lives and the lives of their families. The Girls Gotta Run Foundation raises money to provide athletic shoes, training clothes, food and coaches' fees for Ethiopian girls to support their participation in sports and help them continue their formal education. Money is raised through the sale of art, memberships, and merchandise, as well as through direct donations and sponsored runs.

Exhibit: June 10 – August 30, 2008 (Tuesdays – Saturdays)

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