Cross-Pollination: The Art of Lawrence Ferlinghetti
June 23–September 23, 2012, at the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art
www.svma.org

15 February 2012 – Sonoma, CA: This summer, the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art (www.svma.org) honors the creative life of Lawrence Ferlinghetti with the exhibition Cross-Pollination: The Art of Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s work, in both literature and art, is a drive for liberation, transformation, and union—through love, literature, political struggle, nature, humor, art. Again and again, in paint and in words, he ponders themes of “Her”/woman, the Sea, man adrift, war and pacifism, and often engages in direct dialogue with artists and writers of the past, including Homer and Joyce, Ginsberg and Van Gogh, Picasso and Pound. The exhibition, on view from June 23 through September 23, 2012, focuses on these key themes that have occupied the artist and poet throughout his creative life, in both word and image.

“We are thrilled to be presenting this exhibition of Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s works, of which I am personally a big fan,” says the museum’s Executive Director Kate Eilertsen. “This exhibition takes a unique approach in looking at thematic parallels that have been consistent in his work, in whatever medium he chooses.” Long celebrated as a poet and publisher, Ferlinghetti, who turns 93 this spring, was first a painter, pursuing his craft in Paris shortly after his naval service in World War II. For more than sixty years, he has continued his passion for image-making in paintings, drawings, prints, and mixed media works that have been widely exhibited, including a major survey exhibition in 2010 in Rome and Calabria.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (born March 24, 1919) is acclaimed as a poet, painter, liberal activist, and co-founder of City Lights Booksellers & Publishers in San Francisco. As early as his 1955 book A Coney Island of the Mind (published in 1958 by New Directions)—a collection of poems that has been translated into nine languages, with sales of over 1 million copies—he wrote about himself as a painter and the challenges of the visual artist. The first poem in the bestselling book addresses the work of Goya; and further along, in poem 12, he writes: “One of those paintings that would not die / its warring image / once conceived / would not leave / the leaded ground / no matter how many times / he hounded it / into oblivion…”

Cross-Pollination: The Art of Lawrence Ferlinghetti is guest curated by Diane Roby, an artist and curator who for several years has catalogued Ferlinghetti’s visual art at his Hunter’s Point studio in San Francisco. For this exhibition, she looks especially at the overlap of word and image as Ferlinghetti addresses recurring thematic material. “In Ferlinghetti’s art,” says Roby, “words give rise to image-making, and word and image meld in paint. The poet and painter, with pen and brush, turns his attention to his world of words and paint as he ponders questions of human existence and aspirations.”

Cross-Pollination: The Art of Lawrence Ferlinghetti tracks these themes through selected paintings, drawings, prints, and notebooks. Several works on loan from the artist will be exhibited for the first time, including notebooks of writings with pictures in the margins, and sketchbooks with text on each
page that adds up to a poetic statement; pages of these notebooks will be periodically turned during the exhibition to give repeat visitors a fuller view of the artist forming his thoughts in line and verse. A viewing room will screen videos showing the artist reading, and the poet at work in his studio. Audiotapes will place the poet’s voice alongside the artworks, and wall text will focus on his poetry.

**Cross-Pollination: The Art of Lawrence Ferlinghetti** is generously supported by Cherie and Keith Hughes.

**Cross-Pollination: The Art of Lawrence Ferlinghetti** will be on view at the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, 551 Broadway in Sonoma, June 23 through September 23, 2012. The Museum hours are Wednesdays through Sundays 11am–5pm. Museum admission is $5 general; free for students in grades K-12. Admission is free for all visitors every Wednesday. More information about the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art is available at www.svma.org or by calling (707) 939-7862.

# # #