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For Immediate Release

Joy to the World Straight From Second Avenue in New York City
Local Nonprofit Grace Institute Curates Art Exhibit for the Human Spirit

Viewing: Thursday, December 1, 2011 – Friday, January 13, 2012

Special Reception: Wednesday, December 14, 2011 5:30pm-7pm

Grace Institute, 1233 Second Avenue, New York City

New York, NY (November 15, 2011) –Grace Institute, a New York City based nonprofit organization that provides a free job training program to women announced its upcoming art exhibit **Joy**. The exhibit brings together over 60 original works from Grace Institute students and staff along with local artists and supporters. The exhibit will be on display from December 1, 2011 through January 13, 2012 with a gallery reception on December 14th from 5:30pm – 7pm at Grace Institute’s New York City headquarters. The mixed medium art show poses the question to artists and observers alike: *what brings you joy?*

Joy is the brainchild of Grace’s Director of Career Services, Jolene Varley Handy. In an effort to encourage students at Grace to maintain an optimistic view on what’s going on in their lives and their future, Ms. Handy felt that participating in the creation of an environment filled with positive imagery would help the women to persevere in their journey toward finding full time positions. With an average annual income of \$6K for women before starting the program as compared to a salary of \$32K with benefits for those who are placed in jobs, the women have a lot to look forward to, even amid a slow job market in New York.

“It’s no secret that these are challenging times in the world. We wanted this show to give everyone a chance, particularly at this time of year, to take a moment to think about the joy that each of us has in our lives. The beauty of joy is that it’s often something simple but special to the person experiencing it,” shares Ms. Handy.

One of the contributors to the exhibit is Mimi Chan, a 93-year old watercolor artist. She learned about the exhibit during a visit to the Grace Institute headquarters which houses the Manhattan Bridge Club, where Ms. Chan is an active member. Ms. Chan was so happy to participate in the exhibit that she picked up one of her favorite paintings from her home, a watercolor of a fishing outing, attached it to her walker and transported it to Grace. Students of Grace Institute are also contributing art to Joy. One student submitted a series of photographs, depicting seasonal views from her apartment window.

When the exhibit closes on January 13th, Grace intends to upload all of the images from the show to www.joyartproject.org to allow people to continue to view and enjoy the work. In mid-January, they will kick off a year-long online exhibit of art focusing on joy. Grace hopes to encourage people from around the globe to share their joy. They expect video, photos and audio to be included.

Grace Institute is no stranger to the impact of artistic expression. Ten years ago, Mary Mulvihill, Grace Institute's Executive Director approached a local artist hoping to exhibit their art at Grace. The all female student population of the training program was immediately drawn to the art as well as the artists that spoke at their classes, and expressed excitement about interacting with the New York City art community. Fast forward a decade later, local artists continue to share their talents by exhibiting their work at Grace. On average Grace showcases 6 exhibits per year. Artists such as Lori Sanford-Ross, Rhoda Greif, Yuka Imata, David Snyder and Patricia Montgomerie have all exhibited in past years and will also be participating in Joy.

Ms. Mulvihill states, "The interest in this show has been overwhelming. Originally we wanted to do something special for our students while also showing gratitude for successes we've achieved. Very quickly, we realized that the concept of Joy is universal and wanted to share it with the community-at-large. If we can help people smile and enjoy what they have and forget their troubles, if even for a few moments, this show is a success."

For more information about Grace and its programs visit www.GraceInstitute.org or call 212-832-7605. To RSVP for the Joy reception on December 14th, contact Lense Gebre-Mariam via email at lgebremariam@graceinstitute.org. Grace Institute is located at 1233 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10065.

About Grace Institute (www.GraceInstitute.org)

Founded by twice-Mayor, W.R. Grace in 1897, Grace Institute provides tuition free, practical job training for underserved New York area women. The average annual salary of women entering the program is \$6,000. More than 80% of the graduates from the program are placed in administrative positions with typical salaries of \$32,000. Many leading employers including Ropes & Gray, Fried Frank, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, Bank Leumi, Ogilvy, Continuum Health Partners and Catholic Charities among others hire Grace graduates. Since its inception, Grace Institute has trained more than 100,000 women from the New York City area.

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