

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Steffen Thomas Museum of Art  
(STMA)

Amelia Schwartz  
Marketing Associate  
706-342-7557  
706-342-4348 (fax)  
aschwartz@steffenthomas.org



*Seth Whitehurst accepts his first place award during a ceremony held at the Steffen Thomas Museum of Art on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Presenters are Lisa Conner, STMA Acting Director, (left) and Karen Strelecki, STMA Lead Artist (right).*

### STMA Honors Putnam County High School Artists

BUCKHEAD – On Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, the Steffen Thomas Museum of Art held an awards ceremony at Putnam County High School acknowledging the young student artists who participated in ***Op Art: Opportunities for Employment and Empowerment through the Visual Arts***, a major school project offered by STMA's Arts Outreach Program.

This, the second year of ***Op Art***, a three-year program designed to introduce young people in the tri-county Lake Oconee area to careers in the visual arts and the importance of ecological responsibility, began at Putnam High last October and will continue through May 2010.

During Phase I of the project, working professionals, including an architect, potter, T-shirt and textile designers, and a graphic illustrator, spoke to a group of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>

grade art students about careers in the visual arts. Lee Glenn, a Georgia Power representative, discussed water conservation and the nature of the water cycle.

Next, STMA began 16 weekly in-school art workshops (eight in the first semester and eight in the second). Under the guidance of STMA's Lead Artist Karen Strelecki, and assisted by local artist Peter Myzyka, students painted illustrations of careers in the visual arts on recycled ceramic tiles.

During the awards ceremony, all the students received Certificates of Participation. Awards were presented for the most outstanding pieces selected by a jury of local artists. First Place went to Seth Whitehurst for his rendition of a video game designer, Second Place to Chelsea Bennett (cake designer/decorator) and Third, to Diana Mendoza (cake designer/decorator). Wendy Navarrete, Dan Yan and Elvia Munoz received Honorable Mention awards.

The tiles are on exhibit at the museum through March.

For Phase II of the project, a small group of students, working with professional artists, will use the prize-winning selections as the inspiration for a large tile mural mounted on plywood in the form of a triptych. Once completed the mural will be unveiled during a ceremony at Putnam High in the spring of 2010. A similar program is also taking place at **Morgan County CrossRoads School**.

STMA is most grateful to the following sponsors for making this event possible: Bank of Madison; Georgia Power – A Southern Company; Georgia Power Foundation; The Herald-Journal; HouseSmart; David Crawford, CPA; DreamTeam Technologies; Frances Wood Wilson Foundation; Jim Boyd & Associates; Morgan County Citizen; Smith Communications, Inc.; Madison Studios; Vanishing Rural Georgia Art; Whidby Jewelers; Walmart; C.R. Bard; The Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta – Morgan Fund; Central GA EMC; R.E.M; and Yellowbook.

The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art, located at 4200 Bethany Road in Buckhead, is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 AM to 4 PM. For more information and directions, please call 706-342-7557 or visit [www.steffenthomas.org](http://www.steffenthomas.org).

The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art is located at 4200 Bethany Road in Buckhead. For more information, please call 706-342-7557 or visit [www.steffenthomas.org](http://www.steffenthomas.org).