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Legal Issues in Art Draws Widespread Audience

FORT WORTH, Texas – What began as a preparatory lecture for Texas Wesleyan law students who will attend a summer art law class in Santa Fe quickly developed into an open event that not only included students, but various members of the north Texas art and legal communities.

More than 50 people attended the Issues in Art Law Colloquium at Texas Wesleyan University School of Law on Saturday, May 30. Attendees included lawyers, art collectors, museum officials and gallery owners. The full-day program was comprised of three panel discussions, plus an opening lecture and closing statement.

The colloquium was organized by Texas Wesleyan School of Law Professor Stephen Alton.

“The idea behind the colloquium was to give our art law students some exposure to the legal issues that arise in the art world,” Alton said. “I planned the colloquium only with our students in mind. I wanted them to hear about these real-world legal issues even before they read the cases in the casebook for the art law class later this summer. Several people, including my wife, Judy, found out about the colloquium and thought that folks outside the law school might be interested in attending. This seems to have been the case, as about 20 members of the public who were not connected to the law school attended the colloquium.”

Students in the art law class study legal issues that encompass everything from ownership rights to copyrights to intellectual property. The class travels to Santa Fe each summer to provide students the opportunity to study art law issues in an environment rife with art, museums, galleries and historical Native American ruins.

The colloquium began with an overview of art history, presented by Mark Thistlethwaite, professor of art history at Texas Christian University. Alton said Thistlethwaite was able to relate a number of significant works over the millennia.

Panel discussions covered a wide range of issues and consisted of well-known professionals from across the art and legal communities. The *Galleries, Auction Houses and Artists* panel included Greg Dow, of Dow Art Galleries in Fort Worth; Michael Duty, of the Heritage Auction House in Dallas; Billy Hassell, a Fort Worth artist; and Kevin Vogel, of Valley House Gallery in Dallas. The *Museum Directors* panel consisted of Francine Carraro of the Grace Museum in Abilene; Kimberly Bush Tomio, of the Tyler Museum of Art; and Ron Tyler, of the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth. Finally, a panel of curators, registrars and academicians was comprised of Megan Carpenter, associate professor of law at Texas Wesleyan School of Law; Jana Hill, associate

registrar for the Amon Carter Museum of Fort Worth; and Ken Tomio, curator for the Tyler Museum of Art.

Alton said the exchange between panelists and audience members was like a great classroom discussion rather than a formal presentation. Based on the positive feedback he received, Alton hopes to make the colloquium an annual event.

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