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LOCAL ARTIST TO DONATE ORIGINAL GORILLAS SERIES TO CHARITY

*Studios on the Park Artist Frank Armitage's Work
To Be Auctioned Off By The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund*

Paso Robles, California — Frank Armitage, a resident artist at STUDIOS ON THE PARK in Paso Robles, plans to donate his original series of gorilla drawings to the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International. The nonprofit organization plans to auction off the works to support their efforts to save the last remaining gorillas of Africa.

For Armitage the inspiration behind the works was an accidental one. A History Channel special on the tragic plight of the gorilla made an immediate impression and he decided to try to use his artistic talents to help. Tapping into his past work at Disney Studios on animation backgrounds and layout for feature films including *The Jungle Book*, Armitage began to draw. He quickly identified that his greatest challenge would be to capture the intense look distinctive of gorillas. Fortunately, he soon found the solution to bringing his drawings to life. He reveals, "if you can capture the eyes, the rest of the piece just falls into place." With the eyes as the focal point of each work, Armitage set about experimenting with various mediums including oil stick, charcoal and acrylic.

Over the past two months Armitage has created nearly 20 unique pieces and has become a gorilla ambassador of sorts. Not only has he learned the difference between species, he has even picked some favorites. But, most important for Armitage has been the opportunity to educate the public about the most endangered of the great apes.

Initially, selecting the charity to receive his work was a challenge for Armitage as there are several worthy conservation organizations. However, a Disney connection finally sealed the deal with the Atlanta-based Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International. Executive Director Clare Richardson, explains their excitement: "Wild gorillas have been an inspiration to many and the

desire to help save them takes many forms. We are delighted to have an artist like Frank Armitage use his talents to help the gorillas and we know that his work will inspire others to help as well.”

Armitage believes the nonprofit is well poised to market his work well to successfully raise funds. For Armitage “it is satisfying just to do something for a worthwhile cause.” And with 19 completed gorilla pieces, Armitage has no interest in stopping. He plans to continue to produce ape artwork as long as he can find interested recipients. To that end, he is now experimenting with orangutan drawings for the Center for the Great Apes in Florida.

Founded by Dr. Dian Fossey in 1978, the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International is dedicated to the conservation and protection of gorillas and their habitats in Africa. Based in Atlanta, they are committed to promoting continued research on their threatened ecosystems and education about their relevance to the world in which we live. They also help people in need in communities near the gorillas, through an extensive series of health, education, and community development programs.

STUDIOS ON THE PARK was founded in December of 2007 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to providing a creative, educational, and transformational experience to enhance understanding and appreciation of the visual arts. STUDIOS ON THE PARK realizes its commitment by making the creative process available to the public. STUDIOS engages and inspires the San Luis Obispo County community and its visitors with a unique open studio environment. STUDIOS features artists working in a variety of media, educational programs for children and adults, and quality exhibitions by regional, national and international artists.

STUDIOS ON THE PARK is located at 1130 Pine Street in historic downtown Paso Robles. For more information, visit www.studiosonthepark.org or call 805-238-9800.