FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 2, 2012
Images and Interviews Available on Request

THE SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO DEDICATES NEW LEROY NEIMAN CENTER IN HISTORIC SHARP BUILDING

Chicago, IL—A $5 million donation comes to fruition May 7 as the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) dedicates its new LeRoy Neiman Center with a VIP luncheon and reception for the SAIC community led by SAIC President Dr. Walter E. Massey. Images, background, and more information about the center is available at blogs.saic.edu/thecenter.

The LeRoy Neiman Center is a 17,800 square-foot renovation of the first and second floors of SAIC’s historic John B. and Alice R. Sharp Building, which was designed by Holabird and Roche and constructed 1902–04. This May opening coincides with the completion of a multi-million dollar exterior restoration and tuck-pointing project for the building, conducted over several years, which held an office for world-famous Chicago architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in the 1940s and 50s.

“I fully anticipate that the LeRoy Neiman Center will become the vibrant hub of the SAIC campus,” said SAIC President Dr. Walter E. Massey. “This new space will extend our campus into the urban fabric of Chicago and serve as a gathering space for students, faculty, and alumni. The center will soon be a new home to the free exchange of ideas that happens each day at SAIC. It is a dramatic, beautiful expression of the open dialogue that is vital to the SAIC community.”

The project transforms the northeast corner of Monroe and Wabash into an energetic, light-filled gathering space for SAIC students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Channel glass hung from the ceiling frames the central lounge on the first floor, accentuating the lobby’s abundant natural light. The center will be home to a lounge, café, a new site for SAIC’s Student Union Galleries, and more. A new open staircase connects the first floor lounge and gallery to the café and meeting spaces on the second floor. The architecture firm Valerio Dewalt Train Associates of Chicago was retained to create the center.

A 56-foot-long, eight-foot-tall mural entitled Summertime Along the Indiana Dunes (1965)—co-created and signed by the artists, alumni LeRoy Neiman and his wife, Janet—will be prominently displayed in the lobby beside the newly renovated space, which also features a wall of video monitors for campus broadcasts and new-media technology-based artworks. The mural was originally created for the Mercantile National Bank in Hammond, Indiana. It was commissioned by Jack Murray, chairman of the Indiana bank, who met the young artist in a New York tavern. The 448-square-foot piece vibrantly depicts a sunny scene of family fun on the Indiana beaches. The largest mural ever created by the artist, it was carefully restored by Parma Conservation of Chicago prior to its installation.
ABOUT LEROY AND JANET NEIMAN
The LeRoy Neiman Center was made possible by a $5 million gift from former SAIC faculty member and alumnus LeRoy Neiman and his wife, Janet Byrne Neiman, herself an SAIC alumna. Neiman, who attended the School of the Art Institute from 1946–1950, taught at SAIC for 10 years beginning in 1950, and received an Honorary Doctorate from SAIC in 2006. Neiman met Janet when both were students at SAIC.

Best known for his vibrant, stunningly energetic images of sporting events and leisure activities, LeRoy Neiman is counted among the most popular living artists in the United States. Many of his images of what he calls “the good life,” have appeared in the form of etchings, lithographs, silkscreen prints, and sculptures as well as paintings, in the permanent collections of public and private museums and other institutions worldwide. These institutional acquisitions, along with sales of approximately 150,000 of his silkscreen prints to individuals, attest to the enormous appeal of his work.

About the School of the Art Institute of Chicago
A leader in educating artists, designers, and scholars since 1866, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) offers nationally accredited undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs to nearly 3,200 students from around the globe. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC has an educational philosophy built upon an interdisciplinary approach to art and design, giving students unparalleled opportunities to develop their creative and critical abilities, while working with renowned faculty who include many of the leading practitioners in their fields. SAIC’s resources include the Art Institute of Chicago and its new Modern Wing; numerous special collections and programming venues provide students with exceptional exhibitions, screenings, lectures, and performances. For more information, please visit www.saic.edu

###