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For Immediate Release

## Artist Laurie Swim to help unveil the memorial quilt she originated at York Mills TTC station on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the “Hogg’s Hollow Disaster”



**March 2, 2010 – Toronto:** On March 17, 1960, five immigrant Italian construction workers lost their lives underground while building a new water-main line in suburban north Toronto. Dubbed the “Hogg’s Hollow Disaster,” the day has been commemorated over the years; this year, on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the tragic event, a permanent art installation by one of Canada’s esteemed artists, will be unveiled.

Laurie Swim began *Breaking Ground: The Hogg’s Hollow Disaster 1960*, in 1998 as a Millennium project while she was living in Toronto. Sponsored by COSTI, supported by financial contributions from businesses, corporations and hundreds of individuals, she and dozens of volunteers from the community – a dedicated group of stitchers from all over the GTA, different ages, ethnic origins and walks of life, created the 7’x 20’ (2m x 6m) mixed-media fibre memorial. The volunteers spent an estimated 4,000 hours of sewing with Laurie over 9 months to complete the quilt.

The work immortalizes the five men killed that day: Pasquale Allegrezza, Giovanni Battista Carriglio, Giovanni Fusillo, and brothers Alessandro and Guido Mantella. Swim was fortunate enough to meet with some of the descendents of the men killed and incorporated personal details from their stories into the scene. An open wallet near the centre of the work, for example, includes a representation of a photo of Giovanni Fusillo’s 8-month-old son whom he had never met, which was found in his wallet when his body was recovered.

In her most recent book, *Rags to Riches: The Quilt as Art* (Art Quilt Publishing, 2007), Laurie dedicates a chapter to the creation of *Breaking Ground*, in which she explains, “I have always been interested in the personal stories of ordinary people caught up in extraordinary events ... Their stories intrigue me. This curiosity inspired me to make this project happen.”

Laurie will help unveil *Breaking Ground*, now part of the City of Toronto's Permanent Art Collection, at the York Mills TTC station on March 17, 2010. The quilt serves not only as a memorial to the lives tragically lost while on the job, but also as a celebration of the spirit of community – the volunteers, city officials, organizations and corporations who worked together with a number of individual donors to create this commemorative portrait of a moment in Toronto's history that should never be forgotten.

### **About the Artist**

**Laurie Swim** is one of Canada's finest artists. She has dedicated more than 35 years to developing her unique imagery in textiles with fabric and thread and has shared her art form and practice with others to create meaningful public art in communities across the country. She has also written three books – two published internationally – on quilt art.

Laurie's works grace many private and public collections, including the Nova Scotia Art Bank, Nova Scotia Designer Craft Council, the City of Toronto Art Collection and the Museum of Arts and Design in New York. Her next community quilt project is *The Halifax Explosion Memorial Quilt*, sponsored by the St. Patrick Church Restoration Society in Halifax, due to begin in Fall 2010.

Laurie lived in Toronto and in Kingston, Ontario from 1977 to 2004. In 2003 her work was recognized by the Ontario Arts Council with a \$29,000 Chalmers Arts Fellowship to complete her series, *From Our Back Yard*, started in 1997. Two weeks later she was diagnosed with cancer. After a serious operation in 2004 she left Ontario and returned home to Nova Scotia. She completed the series in 2007. Six years cancer-free, she lives in Blue Rocks with her husband, Larry Goldstein, who publishes her work on paper. She works and teaches in a studio/gallery in Lunenburg, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Since returning home she's created work which reflects the heritage, the sea and the landscape of Nova Scotia's South Shore, where she was born and raised. She's represented by del Mano Gallery in Los Angeles, Zwicker's Gallery in Halifax and Amicus Gallery in Chester, NS.

To learn more, please visit [www.laurieswim.com](http://www.laurieswim.com)



**Laurie Swim will be in Toronto March 15 -19 as part of the *Breaking Ground* unveiling at the York Mills TTC station on March 17, 2010.**

To book an interview with Laurie Swim while she is in Toronto on in advance of the event, or for a high-res image of *Breaking Ground* please contact:

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