

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
August 20, 2014

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Joslyn Art Museum Announces New Gifts of Contemporary Sculpture, Western Painting

(Omaha, NE) – Joslyn Art Museum has installed a new bronze work in its Peter Kiewit Foundation Sculpture Garden – Magdalena Abakanowicz's *Single* (1994). A recent gift of Gail and Michael Yanney, Lisa and Bill Roskens, and Mary and Charlie Roskens, the work is the first by Abakanowicz in Joslyn's collection.

Born in Falentyn, Poland, in 1930, Abakanowicz (pictured right; pronounced *ah-bah-can-oh-vitch*) began making sculptures in the 1950s as a student at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. She quickly garnered critical acclaim for her fiber-based installations and hanging textiles that reflected on her childhood experiences living in Nazi and Soviet-occupied Poland. In the 1970s, Abakanowicz turned her attention toward the human form. She is perhaps most well-known for portraying headless bodies, which are meant to echo the human inclination to follow charismatic leaders blindly, a phenomenon the artist witnessed first-hand during World War II. When Abakanowicz began to receive commissions to create public art installations, she expanded her materials beyond textiles to include bronze, wood, stone, and clay. Her outdoor projects in recent decades have featured multiple identical figures, all oversized and often positioned in rows, to underscore the widespread dehumanization that accompanies totalitarian political systems. Joslyn's new work is a single example of her bronze-cast, headless bodies.



Abakanowicz's work can be found in public collections internationally, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Center for Contemporary Art, Warsaw; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; among many others.

Joslyn's executive director and CEO Jack Becker noted the significance of the acquisition. "We are delighted to add one of Magdalena Abakanowicz's figures to Joslyn's collection. A major contemporary sculptor, Abakanowicz's work is unmistakable. Each of her figures is completely unique, but headless, and often gathered together, her works explore themes of quantity, crowds, anonymity, and "the countless." The meaning of her work gives viewers much to think about, and we thank Michael and Gail Yanney, Lisa and Bill Roskens, and Mary and Charlie Roskens for this important gift."

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Joslyn's internationally recognized collection of Western American art has two new additions – Albert Bierstadt's *Indian on Horseback*, ca. 1870–80, and Frank Tenney Johnson's *Night on the Oregon Trail*, ca. 1930. The two paintings come to the Museum as a gift of Norm W. Waitt, Jr. Both paintings are presently on view in the Lauritzen Gallery (gallery 9) in the Museum's Memorial building.

Born in Germany, Albert Bierstadt became one of the most highly regarded landscape painters of the nineteenth century. Desiring to explore new American vistas, Bierstadt accompanied Colonel Frederick W. Lander's 1859 railroad survey, following the North Platte

River through Nebraska and into the Wind River Mountains. During the Civil War, Bierstadt arranged a second western trip with the writer Fritz Hugh Ludlow, travelling through Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah on their way to northern California and Oregon. Bierstadt seized this territory as his artistic frontier, and was



instrumental in shaping the post-Civil War perception of the West. In 1866, he was one of the first visitors to Yosemite, which became the subject of many of his most famous canvases. His sublime panoramas convinced viewers that the far West was still a rugged, primordial world of unaltered pristine beauty, beckoning Americans to a new land of opportunity. *Indian on Horseback*, with a solitary mounted figure silhouetted against softly-lit mountains, exemplifies the subtlety and careful detail Bierstadt was capable of in his most intimate compositions.

A native of western Iowa, Frank Tenney Johnson studied art and worked as an illustrator in Milwaukee and New York. Hired in 1904 by *Field and Stream* to illustrate the life of cattlemen in Colorado and New Mexico, Johnson made several trips west and became famous for illustrating the western novels of Zane Grey. Although his paintings employed formal elements borrowed from French and American Impressionism, Johnson is most closely associated with Frederic Remington and Charles Russell through their shared interest in life on the trail and range. Johnson was best known for nocturnal scenes like *Night on the Oregon Trail*, where he concentrated on the effects of moonlight on form and color, finding a moment of quiet respite in the frantic adventure of life on a wagon train. "It has been my ambitious desire," he once wrote, "to record on canvas authentically and with fidelity those events and picturesque phases of life which have given us our romantic western background."



Our Mission – Joslyn Art Museum collects, preserves, and interprets the visual arts of the highest quality, fostering appreciation and enjoyment of art for the benefit of a diverse audience.
Our Vision – To be cherished and respected as a premier art museum.

Joslyn Art Museum showcases art from ancient times to the present. The Museum was a gift to the people of Omaha from Sarah Joslyn in memory of her husband, George, who made his fortune as president of the Western Newspaper Union. The Museum's original 1931 building is one of the finest examples of Art Deco architecture in the nation, with 38 types of marble from seven countries. The Walter and Suzanne Scott Pavilion, a 58,000-square-foot addition built in 1994, was designed by renowned British architect Norman Foster as his first U.S. commission. The Museum features galleries, a 1,000-seat concert hall, fountain court, education technology gallery, lecture hall, classrooms, sculpture garden, café, and shop.

Free General Museum Admission. Exhibition admission varies (exhibitions with a ticket fee for non-member adults are advertised as such). Museum Hours: Tuesday–Sunday, 10 am–4 pm, and open late 'til 8 pm on Thursday; closed Monday and major holidays.

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