Contested Terrain
Painting the Modern Landscape
Opens June 30 at Joslyn Art Museum

(Omaha, NE) – *Contested Terrain: Painting the Modern Landscape* addresses the complexities of depicting a contemporary world that is rarely sublime or romantic. Opening at Joslyn Art Museum on June 30 and continuing through September 16, *Contested Terrain* features the work of seven artists — Chuck Forsman, Karen Kitchel, James Lavadour, Jean Lowe, Alexis Rockman, Michael Scott, and Don Stinson — each offering a variety of responses to the challenge of representing a natural world that has been largely overshadowed by human intervention.

*Contested Terrain: Painting the Modern Landscape* is organized by Joslyn Art Museum. Major sponsor Douglas County, contributing sponsor Woodmen of the World, and supporting sponsors Carol Gendler and Wiesman Development. Additional support provided by the Nebraska Arts Council and Joslyn’s Bodmer Society and Contemporary Art Society.

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Exhibition Overview

Rather than searching for scenic vistas or idyllic fragments of wilderness, the artists in *Contested Terrain* uncover a diversity of narratives — personal, environmental, technological, and cultural histories — that are revealed by a careful reading of American topography. Each artist emphasizes the importance of their personal experiences within the American landscape, encouraging close observation and an awareness of one's relationship with nature. Reevaluating the grand traditions of landscape painting that helped shape our national identity, these paintings embody a consciousness of the past while playing against conventional mythologies. Images of reservoirs, wind farms, housing developments, and natural disasters reflect an interest in sites where our preconceptions about the natural world are laid bare. Panoramic vistas of strip mines and clear cut forests replace sites like the Grand Canyon as monuments of a post-industrial landscape we have created yet still struggle to acknowledge. Yet by reworking tradition to accommodate the realities of the present, the beauty that still endures at these intersections of man and nature becomes evident. *Contested Terrain* describes places transformed by development and industry, while still locating moments that speak forcefully of the natural world.

The Artists

Chuck Forsman (American, born 1944) asks what it means to be “in balance” with our surroundings in the twenty-first century. In his paintings, strip mines and dams replace canyons and rivers as monuments to the post-industrial word. His uneasy representations of the tension between development and preservation refuse to shy away from the contradictions of the mythic West.

PICTURED (PAGE 1): Chuck Forsman, *Sacred Cows*, 2011, oil on masonite, Courtesy of Robischon Gallery, Denver, CO

Karen Kitchel (American, born 1957) paints intricately detailed closeups of the western prairie, eschewing a traditional horizontal compositions based on the distant horizon to concentrate on more intimate spaces. Kitchel's art is a sensitive portrayal of the personal and environmental transformations that help shape one's identity.

PICTURED RIGHT (TOP): Karen Kitchel, *Panel no. 2 from the Promontory Series*, 2003, oil on panel, Courtesy of Robischon Gallery, Denver, CO

James Lavadour (American, born 1951) rejects traditional narratives and symbols of western painting in favor of a synthesis of Asian philosophy, jazz, and Abstract Expressionism. Lavadour's fluidly painted surfaces capture the energy and emotion of the geological and cosmic forces that govern our surroundings.

PICTURED RIGHT (BOTTOM): James Lavadour, *Straight Ahead*, 2010, oil on panel, Courtesy of Nate Overmeyer and PDX Contemporary Art, Portland, OR

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Jean Lowe (American, born 1960) depicts the suburban landscape with the trappings of a nineteenth-century painting to examine the relationship between nature and culture, reality and image. In their monumental scale and false grandeur, her paintings become ironic laments for a landscape that is being consumed at an alarming pace.

PICTURED LEFT (TOP): Jean Lowe, *Green Acres*, 2006, oil on unstretched canvas, Courtesy of Quint Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA, and Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

Alexis Rockman (American, born 1962) reveals the tensions of growth and destruction that follow the human impulse to impose order on the environment. Rockman’s apocalyptic paintings synthesize a range of art historical sources including abstraction, museum dioramas, and scientific illustration.


Michael Scott’s (American, born 1952) work critiques the interrelationships of myth, spectacle, and commercialism in Western Americana. Incorporating motifs from art history, folklore, and popular culture, his art engages the complex and often contradictory realities of the contemporary West.


Don Stinson (American, born 1956) revels in scenes of human intervention — satellite dishes, abandoned hotels, highways, and billboards — creating monumental panoramas reminiscent of nineteenth-century Romantic painters such as Albert Bierstadt and Frederic Church. His brightly lit views illuminate a landscape where fictions of the past meet the unsettling realities of a present whose future is precarious and uncertain.

**Exhibition-Related Events**

**Members-only Preview**

On Friday, June 29, from 6–8 pm, Joslyn members will enjoy a preview of the exhibition. At 6 pm, Toby Jurovics, Joslyn’s chief curator and Richard and Mary Holland Curator of American Western Art, will provide an overview of *Contested Terrain*, as well as a second exhibition, *The Great West Illustrated: Celebrating 150 Years of the Union Pacific Railroad*. This members event is sponsored in part by Lamson, Dugan and Murray LLP. Invitations will be mailed. To become a Joslyn member, visit www.joslyn.org or call (402) 661-3858.

**Artist Conversation: *Contested Terrain***

This free public panel event on opening day, Saturday, June 30, 10:30 am to noon, features artists Chuck Forsman, Karen Kitchel, and Don Stinson. The three will discuss their work in *Contested Terrain* and the challenges inherent in painting the contemporary landscape. Moderated by Toby Jurovics, Joslyn’s chief curator and Richard and Mary Holland Curator of American Western Art, the panel discussion will be followed by the opportunity to ask questions of the artists and view their work in the galleries. Admission is free.

**Public Lecture: "Representations of the Prairie in American Art"**

On Sunday, July 8, at 2 pm, Spencer Wigmore, Joslyn Art Museum’s 2011–12 Weitz Family Intern, will address representations of the prairie in American art from the early nineteenth century to the present, discussing artists from Alfred Jacob Miller to Karen Kitchel. Held in Joslyn’s Abbott Lecture Hall, the talk is free with regular Museum admission.

**Curator Gallery Talks**

On Thursdays, July 19 and August 16, at 6:30 pm, join Toby Jurovics, Joslyn's chief curator and Richard and Mary Holland Curator of American Western Art, for gallery talks about the special exhibitions *Contested Terrain: Painting the Modern Landscape* and *The Great West Illustrated: Celebrating 150 Years of the Union Pacific Railroad*. Free with regular Museum admission (discounted to $5 for the general public on Thursdays from 4–8 pm).

For exhibition images or additional information, contact Amy Rummel, director of marketing and public relations, at arummel@joslyn.org or (402) 661-3822.

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Joslyn Art Museum

Joslyn Art Museum is a major regional resource for the collection, preservation, and interpretation of the visual arts. Dedicated to excellence and celebrating art in all its variety, the Museum maintains a collection of art historical significance, ranging from antiquity to the present, with special emphasis on 19th- and 20th-century European and American art. Through its collection, exhibitions, and education programs, Joslyn Art Museum seeks to foster appreciation and enjoyment of art for the benefit of a diverse audience.

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, Baron Foster of Thames Bank, as his first U.S. commission. The Museum features galleries, a 1,000-seat concert hall, fountain court, education technology gallery, lecture hall, classrooms, library, café, and shop.

Museum Admission: $8 adults; $6 senior citizens (62+) and college students (with ID); $5 ages 5-17; free for children four and younger and Joslyn members. The general public is admitted free on Saturdays, 10 am to noon. The general public is admitted free on Thursdays from 4-8 pm. Group rates available for 10 or more with advance reservations. Call (402) 661-3833 or e-mail groupsales@joslyn.org. Increased admission for some special exhibitions. Museum Hours: Tues, Wed, Fri, Sat, 10 am-4 pm; Thurs, 10 am-8 pm; Sun, noon-4 pm; closed Mon and major holidays. Extended hours for some special exhibitions. www.joslyn.org; (402) 342-3300; 2200 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68102