



NEWS RELEASE

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Joslyn Art Museum Announces Permanent Free Admission Beginning May 25, 2013

Omaha, NE – At an afternoon press conference today, Joslyn Art Museum executive director and CEO Jack Becker announced that the Museum will no longer charge general admission, but instead will be free to the public year-round. Among American art museums, over a third have committed to making their collections available for viewing by visitors at no cost, among them The Baltimore Museum of Art, Dallas Museum of Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Saint Louis Art Museum, and The Nelson–Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City, MO). In Omaha, it was founder Sarah Joslyn's intent for the Museum to benefit the greatest number of people possible and be free for all to enjoy – a standard that was met during the first half of the institution's history and that will be realized again now, in its 82nd year.

"This step for Joslyn – for the city of Omaha and the state of Nebraska – is momentous," said Becker. "Today, the course of the Museum is changed forever as we return to the vision of our founder, Sarah Joslyn. She gave Joslyn Art Museum to Omaha for the purpose of serving the entire community as an educational and cultural resource. Now, decades later, our mission remains to provide people with access to original works of art and the intellectual and emotional stimulation and inspiration they provide. The arts and human experience are intrinsically interconnected. When we engage a diverse audience in viewing, thinking, and talking about art, we ensure that future generations are knowledgeable about the past, embrace multiple points of view, understand the complexity of the world we live in, and harness the force of creativity."

"The path to these goals is accessibility; to never deny the opportunity to view original works of art in our collection to anyone because of an inability to pay. At the Museum's heart is its bond with this community and the deep ties Joslyn's collection has with our city's past and present. We are all made stronger when these connections are furthered and deepened. While we serve visitors from around the globe, it is the citizens of Omaha, and the state of Nebraska, who make this the Museum it is. We are grateful to have touched so many, and our relevance and identity only grows with our reach. That is why, after careful deliberation and an incredible gift of financial support from The Sherwood Foundation, we open these doors to all, always."

The Sherwood Foundation, based in Omaha and led by chairman Susan A. Buffett, has provided the Museum with a grant to help defray costs associated with the waiver of general entrance fees. Buffett served on Joslyn's board of governors from 1994 to 2005.

History of Admission at Joslyn

Joslyn Art Museum was a gift to the people of Omaha from Sarah Joslyn, in memory of her husband, George Joslyn. For several decades after its opening in November of 1931, the Joslyn Memorial (as the Museum was originally named) did not charge admission. In the Museum's 1965 Review of the Year, board chairman John F. Merriam reported that a 25-cent admission charge had gone into effect that January, noting, "in the face of the necessity to meet increasing costs, the Board reluctantly took the step of initiating the admission charge." Twenty-two years later, in 1987, admission remained nominal at just \$2 for adults and \$1 for seniors and children under 12. The 1990s marked the beginning of a very gradual pattern of admission increases necessary to keep pace with rising operational costs. Adult admission ticked upward in \$1 increments every three to five years beginning in 1991, reaching the current rate (established in 2010) of \$8.

While many museums on the coasts charge markedly more for general admission (for example, \$25 for an adult at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; \$18 for an adult at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), that fee is driven and sustained by international tourism and constitutes a greater portion of those institutions' overall budgets. Conversely, during its recent move to free admission, the Dallas Museum of Art noted that general admission revenue there, as with the vast majority of museums nationwide, constitutes a very small percentage of its annual budget – just 4 percent. For Joslyn, it is the same, ranging from 2 to 4 percent annually.

Becker explains, "While lost admission revenue is certainly not an insignificant issue, it is not insurmountable. Drawing the community in to a Museum that belongs to all of us, fostering civic pride, audience diversity, and regular interaction with art, is more important to its sustainability in the long run than charging people just to get in the door. Joslyn is a key component in Omaha's quality of place. The move to free admission reflects our commitment to a progressive and inclusive future at the cultural core of our city."

Gary Gates, chairman of the Museum's board of governors, said, "Omaha certainly would rise to the top of any list of cities with intense philanthropic drive. This is a community that has always given generously. There are so many who have turned their hard work and good fortunes into opportunities and experiences for others. Free admission will increase community involvement in Joslyn and lead to an increase in philanthropy; this has been proven at other museums. We are very appreciative of the Sherwood gift, its generosity, and the free admission that it will provide."

The Sherwood grant will be used to cover lost revenue costs and increased building and security expenses. Funds are being sought to secure free admission in perpetuity. Membership revenue as well as fees for select programs, events, and exhibitions will also sustain free general admission.

Memorial Day weekend will herald this new beginning for Joslyn Art Museum and its visitors, with free general admission for all beginning Saturday, May 25. The Museum will be free during all regular public hours (Tuesday,

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Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm; Thursday, 10 am to 8 pm; and Sunday, noon to 4 pm. Joslyn is closed every Monday). Throughout 2013, admission will also be free to all special exhibitions including *Renoir to Chagall: Paris and the Allure of Color* (June 8 to September 1) and *Legacy: The Emily Fisher Landau Collection* (September 28 to January 5).

Free General Admission at Joslyn

What is Included:

- All regular visits to the Museum's permanent collection galleries, public spaces, café, and shop, during all regular Museum hours
- All self-guided adult groups
- All school groups, self-guided or docent-guided
- The sculpture garden and Discovery Garden
- Parking in the Museum's adjacent lot
- Wi-Fi service throughout the entire Museum
- A broad range of Museum events and programs such as family days and lectures (fee-based programs will be advertised as such)
- All regularly scheduled docent-guided public tours (Wednesdays at 1 pm; Saturdays at 10:30 am; select other advertised dates/times)
- Educational outreach materials and in-Museum resources such as Art Packs and iPods.
- Select special exhibitions (*all* special exhibitions will always be free for members).

What is Not Included:

- Major special exhibitions will be ticketed beginning January 1, 2014. Ticket prices will vary based upon the scope and cost of the exhibition. Only Joslyn members will see *all* special exhibitions free of charge. The first ticketed exhibition will be *Poseidon and the Sea: Myth, Cult, and Daily Life* (Feb. 8 to May 11, 2014). Tickets are \$10 (children 17 and younger, Joslyn members, and Museum partners are free) and will be available for purchase on-line and at the Museum beginning in January.
- Fee-based programs such as classes and select special events, programs, and series.
- All member-only events, discounts, and other incentives.

Join Joslyn – the Benefits of Membership

For the past decade, Joslyn Art Museum membership has remained consistent, standing today at 5,000 member households. With several categories, from general to patron, and a variety of benefit offerings, Joslyn membership

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has been chosen by many adults, families, students, seniors, educators, and members of the military. "Our members are the life blood of the Museum," noted Becker. "That was true before and will be even more so in our future as a Museum that has committed to openness and accessibility in every sense of the word. Certainly, apart from the value placed on financial support of the arts that has driven our members to join over the years, a key component of membership has always been the promise of free admission for the purchasing member at any time. Now, with the change to ticketing our major exhibitions, membership guarantees unlimited, free access to these high-quality presentations from all over the world. And, membership, along with donor support, makes and keeps the Museum available to everybody . . . every student, every family, every individual, who wants it. We depend upon our members to send that powerful message of support and to continue to help us make our mission possible when they join Joslyn now and in the future."

Membership rates at the Museum will not change in 2013 (general categories from \$45 to \$60 annually; \$100 for community groups and Young Art Patrons; contributing levels beginning at \$150 and patron levels beginning at \$750). Membership benefits will also remain largely the same, with a few key additions/changes (and with contributing and patron level memberships receiving additional benefits).

All general members receive:

- FREE, unlimited admission to all ticketed special exhibitions
- NEW: Guests of members receive discounts on special exhibition tickets on advertised days
- NEW: Members-only opening weekends for select exhibitions
- NEW: Deeper discounts on fee-based events and programs
- NEW: Select days of the year (such as Mondays) open to members only for gallery and exhibition viewing
- NEW: Select public events will feature early-entry times for members
- Invitations to exclusive members-only events and exhibition previews/openings
- Discounts on all art classes and camps
- Discounts in the café and Museum shop
- Invitations to member appreciation events throughout the year
- Subscription to the quarterly members magazine, *Joslyn NOW*



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.

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, sculpture garden, café, and shop.

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