



BERMAN MUSEUM AT URSINUS RECEIVES UNPRECEDENTED GIFT FROM RENOWNED AMERICAN ARTIST GEORGE R. ANTHONISEN

COLLEGEVILLE, Pa. – Internationally celebrated artist George R. Anthonisen of Bucks County, Pa., will bequeath his entire collection of sculpture, frescoes, drawings and archival materials to the Philip and Muriel Berman Museum of Art at Ursinus College.

The extraordinary gift is being announced by the artist at this time to support the Berman Museum Expansion Campaign, which will add striking new spaces for the exhibition and study of the museum’s permanent collection, only a small portion of which can be displayed in the current facility.

“The Ursinus community is thrilled with this most generous donation,” said Ursinus President John Strassburger. “This gift will distinguish the Berman Museum’s permanent holdings and further define our collection of modern and contemporary sculpture.”

George R. Anthonisen’s public works are in the permanent collections of the U. S. Capitol, Hall of Columns; World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland; New York’s Carnegie Hall; The James A. Michener Art Museum in Doylestown, Pa.; Center for Interfaith Relations, Louisville, Ky.; Please Touch Museum, Philadelphia; Pennsylvania Academy of Music, Lancaster, Pa. and more than two dozen other sites. Most recently his work was featured at Yale University and in the exhibition, *Life in Bronze: The Sculpture of George Anthonisen*, in The Cooley Gallery, Old Lyme, Conn.

The sculptor has had a warm relationship with Ursinus College, noted Lisa Tremper Hanover, Berman Museum director. The Berman Museum of Art showed a major exhibition of Anthonisen’s work 1996: *The Compassionate Spirit, Sculpture and Fresco by George R. Anthonisen*, showcased the artist’s working method and offered the opportunity for the artist to interact with students, faculty, and the museum audience in meaningful ways.

In addition, his major bas relief, *Promise/Anthem* (1998) a commemorative two-panel sculpture commissioned by the Ursinus College War Years Classes of 1942-1949, and the U.S. Navy V-12 and V-5 units, is displayed in the Ursinus Wismer student center.

According to Anthonisen, the Berman Museum “brings together artists, students, faculty and visitors to explore and interact with its exhibitions, whether abstract or realistic.”

Anthonisen’s work has been variously described as humanist and abstract, and overall, it communicates a wide spectrum of human emotion. He has said that “the role of an artist is to put forward ideas that are in conflict; an artist must see both sides of an issue and bring it to life.

“The body of my work relates directly to my concern for the human family. My sculpture and fresco examine our relationship to ourselves and to our fellow humans,” said Anthonisen.

Anthonisen is well known for his stirring sculpture, *I Set Before You This Day* (1982-87), a series of nine figures showing intimate and intense reactions to the Holocaust, an edition of which is included in the gift to Ursinus. Also included are editions of *Creation* (1981); *Caryatid* (1992-1994); *Meditation* (1994-1995); and *Give Us Grace* (1995-1996). Anthonisen’s gift will complement the college’s collection of more than 40 contemporary, large scale sculptures sited on the campus.

“This is a monumental gift that will add an important figurative dimension to our Outdoor Sculpture Collection and enhance our educational mission through the context of maquettes, molds, and archival materials,” said Hanover. “The gift brings distinction to a collection that is built on securing the artistic *oeuvre* of significant modern sculptors and painters.”

Born in Boston in 1936, Anthonisen moved to Bucks County in 1971, where he lives with his wife, Ellen. Anthonisen earned his B.A. from the University of Vermont and studied at the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League in New York. He sculpts figurative images which he first models in clay, then casts into bronze, aluminum, stainless steel or hydrostone. He has written that his work “combines our ancient roots with our recent past, giving validity to the present. The danger in using traditional art by itself is that it ignores the existence of the 20th and 21st centuries, but to use only the visual vocabulary of the 20th and 21 centuries (modern art) can deprive us of our history.”

“Having George’s larger work on permanent view is something we hardly dared dream,” said Ellen Anthonisen. “We know this is a good fit. We have experienced first-hand

how The Berman Museum works with Ursinus students and are impressed with a higher education program that truly cares for art and works diligently toward enriching each student as well as staff and administrative community by exposing them to their continually expanding collection.”

The Berman Museum of Art, known for its diverse collection and innovative educational programming, holds a notable collection of contemporary sculpture, American paintings and works on paper and folk art and 18th and 19th Century American and European paintings among its more than 3,000 notable works of art. The \$7 million campaign for the expansion and renovation has support from the college’s Trustees, Museum Art Advisory Board, alumni, parents, friends and corporate partners. In addition, The Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation has made a \$1 million commitment to the expansion; and the Pew Trusts have committed \$350,000 in a challenge grant to add the 3,000 square feet of gallery and teaching space.

The museum is accredited by the American Association of Museums. Exhibitions and programs are funded in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

Ursinus College is a highly selective, independent coeducational liberal arts college located on a scenic, wooded 170-acre campus, 28 miles from Center City Philadelphia. The college is one of only 8 percent of U.S. Colleges to possess a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. Its web site is located at www.ursinus.edu

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