

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts: Cara Egan, Seattle Art Museum
206-748-9285 / carae@seattleartmuseum.org
Nicole Chism Griffin, Seattle Art Museum
206.654.3158 / NicoleG@seattleartmuseum.org

Seattle Art Museum's Olympic Sculpture Park Opens Jan. 20, 2007

***Waterfront sculpture park transforms Seattle landscape and features
monumental works by artists Richard Serra, Louise Bourgeois,
Alexander Calder, Teresita Fernández, Mark Dion and others***

SEATTLE, Jan. 10, 2007—The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) opens the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park on Jan. 20, 2007, transforming downtown Seattle's last and largest waterfront property into a vibrant green space and dynamic setting for modern and contemporary art. Designed by Weiss/Manfredi of New York, the Olympic Sculpture Park integrates architecture, landscape and urban design, enabling residents and visitors to experience sculpture outdoors while enjoying magnificent views of the Olympic Mountains and Puget Sound. On view are commissions by Louise Bourgeois, Teresita Fernández and Mark Dion, as well as major works by Richard Serra, Alexander Calder and Mark di Suvero, among other leading contemporary artists. The park is open daily to the public free of charge.

The Olympic Sculpture Park opens with a celebratory weekend of free festivities on Jan. 20-21, 2007, beginning with a dedication ceremony that features a musical procession and the official ribbon-cutting. Weekend events also include live music and dance performances on two stages, representing Seattle's diverse cultures, educational art-making activities for families, artist demonstrations and a special teen night.

The \$85-million Olympic Sculpture Park is the first of two major SAM building projects to be completed in 2007; the second, an expanded downtown museum, is scheduled to open on May 5, 2007. With three dynamic locations, including Volunteer Park's Seattle Asian Art Museum, the Seattle Art Museum is poised to provide a cultural legacy for the city and the

region. The projects are being funded through a \$180 million capital campaign, of which \$173 million has been raised to date.

“This is an extraordinary time for culture in the Northwest. The cumulative impact of opening the Olympic Sculpture Park and expanding our museum downtown will make a bold imprint on downtown Seattle and the region, further defining and fulfilling SAM’s core mission to go beyond our walls and connect with our community,” says Mimi Gates, director of the Seattle Art Museum. “The successful, ongoing fundraising effort for both projects reflects Seattle’s longstanding commitment to the environment, public art, and urban vitality.”

In 1999, the Seattle Art Museum, in partnership with the Trust for Public Land, raised generous private funds to purchase the land—a former brownfield—for the Olympic Sculpture Park. Vacant for years, the parcel was previously a fuel-transfer site for Union Oil of California. Additional property for the park was later purchased with grants from the federal government, King County and the City of Seattle. In addition, Jon and Mary Shirley generously gave \$20 million to endow the park’s operations which enabled the park to be free.

Design

The Olympic Sculpture Park’s unique Z-shaped design unifies three parcels of land separated by a road and railroad tracks to create a dynamic and flexible setting for experiencing art and nature. The park zigzags from a split-level pavilion at the top of the park down to Elliott Bay, leading visitors through four ecologically diverse environments along the way.

“We aspired to create a sculpture park at the intersection of the city and the water, and to define a new model for bringing art to the public,” said Marion Weiss of Weiss/Manfredi Architects. “Our intent is to establish connections where separations existed, inventing a setting that implicitly questions where the art begins and park ends.”

Located at the park’s main entrance, the light-filled PACCAR Pavilion houses a flexible exhibition and public event space, as well as a café, The PACCAR Pavilion features folded

stainless steel and mirrored custom glass to capture reflections of the surrounding landscape, and cantilevered roofing that links interior and exterior spaces. The pavilion is adjoined by the Gates Amphitheater which features descending grass terraces for outdoor films and performances. Parking is located underneath.

The park's 2,500-foot path provides for a continuous landscape across the roadway and railroad, the latter featuring artist Teresita Fernández's *Seattle Cloud Cover* (2004-06), a laminated glass canopy composed of vividly hued images of changing skies and cloud formations, from which visitors can glimpse the Seattle skyline through porthole-like windows.

Drawing on Puget Sound's unique ecology, the park's distinct landscapes are designed to provide multi-textured spaces for art. Two *Meadows* of native grasses and wild flowers—the Barry Ackerley Family *East Meadow* and the Kreielsheimer *North Meadow*—join a series of three garden precincts—*Grove*, *Valley* and *Shore*—that represent archetypal Northwest landscapes. The *Valley*, an evergreen forest of fir, cedar and hemlock typical of the region, features ancient trees once native to Washington, such as the ginkgo and the majestic Dawn redwood. Flowering perennials and ferns define the *Valley's* edges and pathways. Situated between the city and shore, the Henry and William Ketcham Families *Grove* is a deciduous forest of quaking aspen that will dramatically reflect the changing seasons. The *Shore* includes the only beach in downtown Seattle, featuring low-lying pines and beach grasses. A restored shoreline offers a regenerative landscape for salmon, and a series of drift logs offers informal seating on the pocket beach, while protecting fragile habitat.

Artistic Program

Designed to be flexible, evolving and accessible, the Olympic Sculpture Park's artistic program features works of art commissioned specifically for the park, selections from SAM's collection, works on loan and changing installations. As originally envisioned by Lisa Corrin, who served as SAM's Deputy Director of Art and Jon and Mary Shirley Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art from 2001 to 2005, a range of permanent and rotating works and

commissions will be continually redefined by the changing seasons, time of day and weather, engaging visitors through the element of surprise.

Prominent works by leading modern and contemporary sculptors, including Alexander Calder's iconic *Eagle* (1971), anchor key areas of the park to establish a strong foundation for visitors. *Eagle*'s soaring height, at nearly 40 feet and in the artist's signature red, creates a powerful abstract silhouette. One of the artist's most significant large-scale stabiles, the work marks the park path's mid-point and serves as a central landmark for visitors. Located in the Valley, Richard Serra's *Wake* (2003) comprises five monumental pairs of curved steel forms, each with the profile of a solid, vertically flattened "S." Evoking tidal waves or the profiles of battleships, *Wake* alludes to Seattle's waterfront and historic shipbuilding industry.

Louise Bourgeois' site-specific commission, *Father and Son* (2004-05), is unique as the park's only fountain and single representation of the human figure. Located at the southwestern entrance near the waterfront, the work is fabricated in stainless steel and features two classically inspired nudes. The sculpture functions as a clock; on the hour, a bronze ship's bell rings and water rises over one figure and recedes over the other, revealing only one figure at a time. Poignantly father and son only see each other for a split second. The park also features Bourgeois' Surrealist *Eye Benches, I, II and III* (1996-97), functional seating of oversized eyeballs carved from black granite.

Another major commission is Mark Dion's *Neukom Vivarium* (2004-06), a hybrid of sculpture, architecture, environmental education and horticulture that explores the artifice of the park's natural landscape. Sited at the corner of Elliott Avenue and Broad Street, the work features a 60-foot decaying "nurse log" enclosed in a greenhouse. Cycles of decay and renewal will be evident to current and future generations of park visitors, who can observe the thriving bacteria, fungi, lichen, plants and insects with microscopes and artist-designed field guides.

The park also features monumental and influential works by Tony Smith, Mark di Suvero, Roxy Paine, Ellsworth Kelly, Louise Nevelson, Anthony Caro, Beverly Pepper, Roy

McMakin and Claes Oldenburg & Coosje van Bruggen. A rotating program of commissioned works will be displayed in the PACCAR Pavilion, beginning with a photographic installation by Seattle artist Glenn Rudolph, and interactive sculptures and a mural by Mexico City's Pedro Reyes.

Public Programming

SAM's public programs at the Olympic Sculpture Park are designed to connect art with the environment, enriching the park experience. The inaugural season will feature a diverse, multidisciplinary program of live performances, hands-on art activities, tours, lectures and talks for adults and children.

Park visitors can explore the art and nature of the park every weekend on guided *Site*, *Sculpture*, *Shoreline* tours, as well as through special environmental and ecological tours led by the Audubon Society (Feb., 10), University of Washington (March 10) and Woodland Park Zoo (March 10).

SAM has launched two new programs in conjunction with the park's opening. *Taking the Pulse: Performance at SAM*, explores new trends in music, dance, opera, literary and theatrical performance, with events at all three SAM sites. On Feb. 14, Roy McMakin performs a special work for Valentine's Day based on his park installation *Love & Loss*. The *Creatively Speaking* series, which provides a forum for artists to share their process and inspiration, begins with a talk with photographer Glenn Rudolph on March 22.

The park will also host a number of fun family, youth and teen activities, including Teen Night Out, a break-dancing and DJ party organized by SAM's Teen Advisory Group, and Family Fun days on the third Saturday of every month, with activities including a family dance party, a musical instrument-making workshop and celebrations of Native heritage.

Weiss/Manfredi Architects

WEISS/MANFREDI, ARCHITECTURE, LANDSCAPE, URBANISM is a multidisciplinary design practice based in New York City. Founded by Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi, the

firm was awarded the Academy Award for Architecture by the American Academy of Arts and Letters and was named “an emerging voice” by the Architectural League of New York. Weiss/Manfredi Architects was hired as the lead designers of the Olympic Sculpture Park in 2001 after an international search and competition. Their interdisciplinary design for the Olympic Sculpture Park has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Harvard University and the Design Center in Essen, Germany.

Recently completed projects include the award-winning Museum of the Earth in Ithaca, New York; the Greentree Foundation’s Whitney Center for the U.N.; the Smith College Campus Center in Northampton, MA; the Robinhood Library, PS 42, and the Olympic Rowing Facility, both in New York City. Other completed projects include the Olympia Fields Park and Cultural Center and the Women’s Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. Current projects include the Nexus Building, a new mixed-use arts center at New York’s Barnard College and the design of the Brooklyn Bridge/FDR Exchange for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation.

Marion Weiss teaches at the University of Pennsylvania and was recently named the Graham Chair Professor of Architecture. Michael A. Manfredi is currently the Gensler Visiting Professor at Cornell University.

SAM Downtown Expansion and Seattle Asian Art Museum

In addition to the Olympic Sculpture Park, the Seattle Art Museum has two other locations: SAM downtown and the Seattle Asian Art Museum in Volunteer Park. SAMdowntown has a stunning new expansion, designed by Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works Architecture, which opens to the public on May 5, 2007. The striking vertical design is a continuous ribbon of space that allows for the expression of natural light and the interaction between life in and outside the museum. The expansion increases SAM’s exhibition space by 70 percent to accommodate rapidly growing collections, programs and audiences while enhancing downtown Seattle’s cultural and economic vitality. Developed in conjunction with Washington Mutual’s new headquarters, the first phase will

inaugurate 118,000 square feet of new space, including two free public floors. From the outset, SAM owns twelve floors of the new expansion but is leasing eight floors to Washington Mutual to use as office space. After ten years, the museum can move into the additional floors which were built and designed to display works of art. Eventually Seattle will have a 450,000 square foot museum in the heart of the urban core.

Also planned are renovations to the Seattle Asian Art Museum (SAAM) in Volunteer Park, the museum's original art moderne home, which was designed by Carl Gould and opened in 1933. Following the museum's 1991 expansion to downtown Seattle, the Volunteer Park facility reopened in 1994 as the Seattle Asian Art Museum, housing extensive collections of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian and Southeast Asian art. The museum also provides cultural programs and resources for Seattle's vibrant and growing Asian communities.

Grand Opening Weekend presented by Target. Media sponsors include The Seattle Times, Seattle Post Intelligencer, King 5, Kong 6/16, and Northwest Cable News. In-kind support generously provided by Cole & Weber United.

###