

**wexner center
for the arts**

For immediate release: January 7, 2005

Media contacts: Karen Simonian, Communications Manager, ksimonian@wexarts.org or 614 292-9923;
Shelly Casto, Educator for School and Family Programs, scasto@wexarts.org or 614 688-3986

**WEXNER CENTER'S ART & ENVIRONMENT COURSE TAKES
LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO NEW YORK**

***18-WEEK, INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM CULMINATES IN TRIP TO VISIT PROJECT IN
CENTRAL PARK, ARTISTS' STUDIOS, GALLERIES; LOCAL EXHIBITION PLANNED***

The Wexner Center's innovative course for high-school juniors and seniors, **Art & Environment**, culminates in a trip to **New York City February 18–20** to experience first-hand environmental art projects, artists' studios, and museums and galleries. This trip, just announced to students, caps an 18-week course that involves interaction with internationally known artists along with OSU professors in a variety of fields, from polar exploration to wetland research to folklore. Students conducted their own research, guided by an Ohio State graduate student and Wexner Center staff, and have been developing their own art projects addressing environmental issues.

"This trip is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these students, and they are really looking forward to it," says Shelly Casto, educator for school and family programs at the Wexner Center, and facilitator of Art & Environment. "The art they will see in New York will further illuminate the work they've done and the ideas they've studied up to this point. It will be an invaluable learning experience for them—one that, we hope, will help to inform their futures as they go on to become professional artists or scientists or educators."

The trip to New York will allow the students to experience **The Gates**, a highly anticipated project in Central Park conceived and developed by artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude over a 25-year period. The Gates are composed of 7,500 drapes of saffron-colored fabric suspended by 16-foot high steel pillars and beams situated throughout 23 miles of walkways in Central Park. The entire Gates project will be installed for only 16 days, and as such, is sure to become a mecca for millions of people from around the world. The students will also see the newly reopened **Museum of Modern Art, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Socrates Sculpture Park, Chelsea galleries, the American Museum of Natural History**, and more, **including a visit to artist Alexis Rockman's studio** (the students met with and interviewed Rockman during a recent trip to the Wexner Center).

Art & Environment will conclude with an **exhibition** of the students' projects at the **Shot Tower Gallery**, 546 Jack Gibbs Blvd. on the Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education

Center campus in Columbus, **February 21–March 18** (opening reception February 25, 6–8 pm). The exhibition is titled *Interventions: Students Respond to the Environment with the Wexner Center for the Arts*; the exhibition and reception are free and open to the public.

MORE ABOUT THE COURSE

In the fall of 2004, the Wexner Center launched Art & Environment, a pioneering course for high-school credit that met once a week for 18 weeks. Students had the opportunity to learn from and work with internationally known artists Alexis Rockman, Hope Ginsburg, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles, all of whom had work on view at the Wexner Center this fall. The students also worked with William J. Mitsch, director of the Olentangy River Wetland Research Park at The Ohio State University's School of Natural Resources; W. Berry Lyons, director of OSU's Byrd Polar Research Institute; Elizabeth Marschall, OSU professor of evolution, ecology, and organismal biology; Patrick Mullen, OSU professor of English, comparative studies, and folklore; and Kristi Michels, director of education at the Solid Waste Authority of Ohio. Jodi Kushins, an OSU graduate student in art education, has guided the students' research.

"Art & Environment engages teens in creative and critical thinking at a formative time in their lives," says Wexner Center Director Sherri Geldin. "In addition to sparking their intellect and their imagination, this program has introduced them to the notion of museums and art centers as resources for lifelong learning and stimulation. We're very proud of this cross-disciplinary initiative." The course content will be documented for use in a curriculum kit on art and the environment.

THE WEXNER CENTER'S PROGRAMS FOR TEENS

The Wexner Center has built a reputation for its pioneering education programs for all ages, and in recent years has developed a variety of innovative arts programs specifically for teens. These programs, in part, serve to fill a void in the educational system at a time when funding for arts education in the schools is being curtailed. Art & Environment is an example of an entirely new kind of initiative, and one that is truly multidisciplinary. This program and others, such as the wexLab and teenArts Fusion series of workshops for teens, have provided young adults with constructive opportunities for creative expression and artistic development, encouraging life skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, and organizational and leadership skills. Past

programs have included courses on video production, theater, photography, cartooning, skateboard design, and much more.

SUPPORT FOR ART & ENVIRONMENT

Art & Environment is made possible with support from the **MetLife Foundation Museum Connections Program** and **The Harry C. Moores Foundation**.

The Wexner Center's 2004–05 education season is presented by **Bank One**.

Additional support for the New York City trip provided by **Loann W. Crane, Dareth Gerlach, DeeDee and Herb Glimcher**, and **Joyce and Charles Shenk**.

Programs for teachers and school groups are presented with additional support from **Honda of America Manufacturing, Inc., American Electric Power, Ohio Arts Council, Martha Holden Jennings Foundation**, and the **Corporate Annual Fund of the Wexner Center Foundation**.

###30###