

For Immediate Release

AT THE UNLIKELY INTERSECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARTS WORLD AND A UNIVERSITY IN THE HEARTLAND, THE WEXNER CENTER REOPENS IN OCTOBER

Center Will Reunite All Programs in Its Landmark Building,

Restored to Idiosyncratic Glory by a Three-Year Renovation

COLUMBUS, OH – With a sumptuous exhibition of contemporary artworks, a high-tech theater production about life in the Digital Age, an on-screen tribute to a boundary-breaking film director, and the awarding of the Wexner Prize to a dance visionary, the pioneering Wexner Center for the Arts will reopen with a week of festivities, October 28 – November 5, 2005.

The week's events celebrate the completion of a comprehensive \$15.8 million renovation of the Center's unprecedented building by Peter Eisenman, which opened in 1989 on the campus of The Ohio State University and was instantly acclaimed as a cultural landmark. For the first time in more than three years, the Wexner Center will unite under one roof its diverse and innovative programs, encouraging the creative combustion that can be sparked when artists work across disciplines and audiences experience the full range of artistic expression in a single place.

"The Wexner Center is the country's only fully multidisciplinary arts center rooted in a major research university," says Sherri Geldin, Director of the Wexner Center. "For everyone who wondered if this unique institutional model could survive through the years and flourish, we believe the reopening in October will deliver a resounding yes."

Program highlights of the reopening are:

- ***Part Object Part Sculpture*** (October 30, 2005 – February 26, 2006), an exhibition organized by Wexner Center curator Helen Molesworth, which

reinterprets the course of the visual arts over the past half century by exploring the organic, hand-made work of artists from Marcel Duchamp and Louise Bourgeois to Robert Gober and Wexner Center Residency Award artist Josiah McElheny.

- ***SUPER VISION*** (November 2-6), a theater work by Wexner Center Residency Award artists The Builders Association in collaboration with the computer animation studio dbox: an often humorous foray into surveillance technology and the transformation of our identities into “data bodies.” The Wexner Center is lead co-producer of the show and sponsored The Builders Association’s residency in association with OSU’s Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design.
- **A Tribute to Louis Malle** (begins November 2), featuring a special appearance by Candice Bergen on November 10. This salute to the late Franco-American film director will highlight works ranging from documentary (*God’s Country*) to dramatized memoir (*Au revoir les enfants*) to a delicious melding of cinema and theater (*My Dinner With André*).
- The 2005 **Wexner Prize** Ceremony and related events (October 28–29) honoring choreographer-dancer Bill T. Jones, who follows such legendary artists as Bruce Nauman, Yvonne Rainer, Martin Scorsese, Gerhard Richter, Renzo Piano, William Forsythe, and Issey Miyake in receiving this prestigious international award. Jones will spend time with OSU dance students, in addition to performing his new evening-long *As I Was Saying...* for an audience of 2,500 people.

“The events of the reopening week sum up what’s so extraordinary about the Wexner Center,” Geldin remarks. “We bring artists from near and far to develop their ideas, produce and present their work, and engage with OSU students and faculty. At the same time, we collaborate with first-tier institutions, nationally and abroad, on the commission and exchange of exhibitions, performances, and film programs. The center has truly become a laboratory for artistic experimentation and a hub of cultural discourse, serving the Ohio State community, the Columbus region, and diverse publics around the world.”

Preserving a Landmark of Innovation

Sparking this celebration across all art forms is the renovation of the center's acclaimed and provocative home. Designed by Peter Eisenman with Columbus-based architect Richard Trott, the Wexner Center building won fame and notoriety immediately upon opening in 1989, when major critics and architects gathered in Columbus to celebrate Eisenman's achievement. *Progressive Architecture* devoted an issue to the design. *Newsweek* called the building "a triumph—crazy, inventive and full of life."

Occupying the irregular, "found" space between two other campus structures, the Wexner Center building digs deep into its site and at the same time seems to erupt out of it. The most prominent and evocative image of the building is its exterior metal grid, which runs the full length of the facade, tilting upward to a height of about five stories. Eisenman has described this grid as a permanent scaffold, a metaphor for an institution perpetually in the process of constructing contemporary culture.

The Ohio State University and the Wexner Center Foundation have joined together in a concerted effort to preserve this extraordinary work of architecture, which is both a symbol of perpetual change and a monument to a particular moment in architectural history. Addressing infrastructural problems that had long troubled this highly experimental building, OSU invested \$14.5 million and the Foundation \$1.3 million to rebuild and enhance the skylight and curtain wall system; upgrade the entire HVAC and mechanical systems, including installation of state-of-the-art climate and environmental controls; and improve all public amenities, including the Film/Video Theater, Bookshop, and lobbies. As a result of the renovation—which carefully preserves Eisenman's original design intent—artworks in all media can now be properly presented in the center's galleries, enhanced by a newly calibrated luminosity.

“Our goal was to restore the Wexner Center to its original promise, and in some respects to the unfulfilled potential of its original promise,” Sherri Geldin says. “Despite what one might initially imagine about the building, it is a remarkably generous and generative space in which to work. I look forward to installing art again in our galleries, and to re-establishing the long-dormant but ever-fascinating dialogue between the space, the architecture, and the works of art.”

The galleries were closed in summer 2002 so that the center, the university, and their consultants could fully study the building and determine how best to address its needs. The renovation has been carried out for OSU and the Wexner Center by the international design and engineering firm Arup, in collaboration with the University Architect’s Office, an independent project management firm, and a local consulting architect. From the outset of this project, it has enjoyed the full commitment and support of the Wexner Center Foundation, led by chairman Leslie H. Wexner, and of The Ohio State University, led by Karen Holbrook.

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