



WADSWORTH ATHENEUM
MUSEUM OF ART

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Commissioned Artwork by Jack Pierson Illuminates Hartford's Main Street at Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art has acquired and installed a site-specific, multi-media artwork by American artist Jack Pierson. Hovering above the Main Street entrance, the letters “OMG” provide a colorful and engaging element to the museum’s historic, Gothic-revival façade. A temporary addition to the museum’s exterior, “OMG” is the first in a changing series of contemporary art projects planned for the museum’s façade. The installation of the piece will be completed today, and is scheduled to be fully illuminated for the first time this evening. “OMG” is the first work by Jack Pierson to enter the Wadsworth Atheneum’s

collection, and is the first major public museum commission for the artist, as well as the only outdoor work by the artist in the Northeast.

This façade project derives from conversations museum staff had with different groups from the Greater Hartford community, who consistently reported that the Wadsworth Atheneum's exterior was unwelcoming. Evocative, contemporary, and with a touch of humor, "OMG" engages the public and youth culture via SMS (short message service) language used in instant messaging. Its translation—"Oh My God," "Oh My Goodness," or "Oh My Gosh"—is generally understood by everyone, and considered a positive exclamation. With this statement, the museum enthusiastically exclaims that the renovation of its historic campus of buildings is complete, and alludes to the amazing works of art visitors will experience inside the museum. The statement also falls in line with the Wadsworth Atheneum's slogan, "New Since 1842," and suggests a combination of the old and new, which is reflected in the museum's active acquisition of contemporary art.

"OMG" will have presence during the day and night. At night, the piece will be lit with neon and light bulbs, with the light bulbs of the "M" blinking in a subtle sequence. The artist describes it as, "individual bulbs, like an old Las Vegas style sign, with some movement. Not garish, not strobe, not jarring." This new public art work joins other important pieces in the immediate vicinity such as Carl Andre's "Stone Field Sculpture" across the street, Tony Smith's black "Amaryllis" in front of the museum and Alexander Calder's "Stegosaurus stabile" on Burr Mall.

Pierson's mash-up of found letters from old signs, sometimes installed with lit elements, is a signature language and style that the artist has utilized since the early 1990s. A single word, a phrase or a sentence can make up a Pierson wall sculpture or public artwork. Pierson has created more than 100 of these pieces over several decades, but only two outdoor works to date. "PARADISE" is in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami and "CA." is on the exterior of Regen Projects, Pierson's Los Angeles gallery.

Jack Pierson is an artist from New England with an international presence. Born and raised in Plymouth, Mass., Pierson earned a BFA at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. He is known as a member of the "Boston School" of artists that includes David Armstrong, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Nan Goldin, Mark Morrisroe, Taboo! (Stephen Tashjian) and Shellburne Thurber. Pierson's first major exhibition was the dual exhibition, "Edward Hopper & Jack Pierson," at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1994. Pierson's important

solo exhibitions include: the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (1995); Frankfurter Kunstverein in Germany (1997); Sprengel Museum Hannover, Germany (1999); Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami (2002); Centre d'Art Santa Monica, Barcelona (2007); Irish Museum of Art, Dublin (2008); and Centro de Arte Contemporaneo de Málaga, Spain (2009). Pierson's work is in the collections of the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Pierson lives in New York and Southern California, and is represented by Cheim & Read in New York.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continually operating public art museum in the United States. The museum's nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Since 2010 the museum has been undergoing a major, \$33 million renovation, and will celebrate a grand reopening Sept. 19, 2015. Hours: Wednesday – Friday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; First Thursdays: 11 a.m. – 8 p.m. Admission: \$5 – 10; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission 4 – 5 p.m. Wednesday – Friday. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

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