



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART'S MATRIX 169  
FEATURES NEW WORK BY RUBEN OCHOA**

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art presents three new works by post-minimalist sculptor Ruben Ochoa in an exhibition titled, “Ruben Ochoa / MATRIX 169: Cloudless Day,” on view June 5 – Sept. 7, 2015. The works in “Cloudless Day” tackle the genre of California landscape painting, but with the artist’s own personal interpretation. After more than a decade of exploring sculpture as a medium, Ochoa has returned to his painting practice to create large-scale, sculptural canvases that draw inspiration from California Impressionism, various contemporary art movements like Color Field Painting and Land Art and diverse popular culture sources.

Best known for his monumental sculptural installations that explore the urban landscape and are created from accessible construction and building materials, Ochoa “deconstructs a construction worker aesthetic,” seeking to nudge the viewer into reassessing their perception of the everyday environment. The artist’s pieces serve as a gateway to issues on class and culture, and the working and merchant class; the virtually ignored population that keeps the machination of large cities such as Los Angeles running and prospering. In that liminal space where Man and Nature collide, is an Ochoa artwork.

“The early-twentieth-century idealized vision of the natural landscape has been stripped away by Ochoa,” said Patricia Hickson, Emily Hall Tremain Curator of Contemporary Art. “Through his use of everyday objects and references to popular culture, he has defined a twenty-first-century authentic version of the built environment based in social abstraction.”

Ochoa reduces his landscapes to two tones, representing earth and sky. For the blue skies, he turned to house paint—a medium famously used by abstract expressionist Franz Kline. In selecting the various tones, Ochoa was intrigued by the paint colors of lifestyle icon Martha

Stewart because of their poetic names—Cloudless Day, Darkening Sky, Morning Fog, etc.—and relished the irony that names for interior paint colors allude to the external environment; we humans build shelters to shield us from the elements and yet paint walls with colors that directly reflect the outside world.

Ochoa's deceptively simple compositions juxtapose monochromatic skies with rugged, earthy terrains. Far from traditional formal or geometric abstractions, the flat, single-toned skies disclose texture in horizontal or vertical grooves created by applying the paint with a handheld broom or push broom. The landscapes are composed of dirt, specifically California dirt that is a mix of sand and gravel—the kind used as an aggregate for concrete. One of the artist's signature materials, it is a deliberate reference to the urban landscape of Los Angeles. This approach counters the tradition of the painted vistas that celebrate Nature's beauty and embody "a continuation of Ochoa's interest in the poetic potential of vernacular materials and urban signifiers." The rough dirt brings a three-dimensional, sculptural presence to the work, and the artist has enhanced this perception by using three-inch stretcher bars to increase the depth of the painting. The exaggerated, yet pared-down constructions simultaneously signify contradictory elements: nature and industry, representation and abstraction, content and formalism.

Ruben Ochoa earned a BFA in 1997 at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles and a MFA in 2003 from University of California, Irvine. Ochoa has had solo exhibitions at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo; Site Santa Fe; the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; and Locust Projects, Miami. His work has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions at venues including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; El Museo del Barrio, New York; the Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; and the Center for Contemporary Arts, Tel Aviv, Israel. He was also included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial. He has received a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, a Rockefeller Fellowship in New Media, and a Visual Arts Grant from Creative Capital. Ochoa's work can be found in the public collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Pérez Art Museum, Miami; and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo.

### **Exhibition Credit**

MATRIX 169 is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The MATRIX program is also supported in part by the current and founding members of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's Contemporary Coalition. Support for the Wadsworth

Atheneum is provided in part by the Greater Hartford Art Council's United Arts Campaign and the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development Office of the Arts, which also received support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

### **Related Programming**

An opening reception for "Ruben Ochoa / MATRIX 169" will take place during the museum's First Thursday event Thursday, June 5, from 5 – 9 p.m. The artist will give a gallery talk at 6 p.m. Admission is \$5, free for members. The museum's Aug. 9 Second Saturday program will feature activities inspired by the exhibition and a gallery talk by Hickson will occur Aug. 14 at noon and is free with museum admission.

### **About MATRIX**

MATRIX, a changing exhibition of contemporary art, was initiated in 1975 as an experimental pilot project with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Since then, MATRIX has presented over 1,000 works of art by more than 160 artists. MATRIX has served as the first one-person show in the United States for many distinguished artists, including Jonathan Borofsky, Daniel Buren, Neil Jenney, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Glenn Ligon, Gerhard Richter, Cindy Sherman, Lorna Simpson, Nancy Spero, Richard Tuttle and Carrie Mae Weems. From its inception, MATRIX has been a forum for art that is challenging, current and sometimes controversial, calling into question preconceptions about art and inspiring more than 50 similar programs across the country, including the MATRIX Program at the UC Berkeley Art Museum.

### **About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest 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 Museum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to Modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Connecticut. Hours: Wed – Fri: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Sat & Sun: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; First Thursdays: 11 a.m. – 8 p.m. Admission: \$5 – 10; discounts for members, students and seniors. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org).

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