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James Welling, *Morgan Great Hall* (detail), 2015, inkjet print, courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner, New York/London

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art Celebrates Grand Reopening with Original Artwork by Artist James Welling

Renowned artist and Hartford native James Welling has created a series of composite photographs showcasing the history of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art to celebrate its completion of a five-year, \$33 million renovation. Welling's "Morgan Great Hall" has been chosen as the face of the Sept. 19 reopening, which will feature the renewal of the historic Morgan Memorial Building and the first complete reinstallation of the European art collection in a generation.

"We are thrilled and grateful that an artist as accomplished as James Welling has devoted his immense talent and time to create stunning images in celebration of our beloved museum," said Susan L. Talbott, Director and C.E.O. "The Wadsworth Atheneum is truly blessed to have

such a friend in James and to now have these incredible artworks to mark such a triumphant moment in our history.”

To create these photographs, Welling combined historic images from the museum’s archives with new images he took during the museum renovation. Using Adobe Photoshop he created brilliant new tones and vivid hues by stacking the historic and contemporary images in the program’s three color channels. The finished products are inkjet prints that the museum will use to commemorate its grand reopening year.

Welling was born in Hartford in 1951, and has a rich history with the Wadsworth Atheneum. As a youth in 1965 he took drawing classes at the museum, and started to explore watercolor work inspired by Charles Burchfield, Edward Hopper, and Andrew Wyeth. Before moving to Pittsburgh to attend Carnegie Mellon University in 1969, Welling frequented the Wadsworth Atheneum, as well as the New Britain Museum of American Art and the Yale University Art Gallery. Despite having no formal training in photography, Welling began experimenting with black-and-white photographs in the early 1970s, eventually setting up a darkroom and teaching himself the rudiments of developing and printing. He went on receive a grant in photography from the New York Foundation for the Arts, create diverse series of photographs and photograms, and hold teaching positions at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Bard College. The Wadsworth Atheneum purchased Welling’s 1981 “Untitled (Foil)” photograph in 1998 as part of the Contemporary Art collection, and in 2012 exhibited his project “Wyeth,” a suite of photographs made in the same locations that Andrew Wyeth painted. Welling is currently a professor in the Department of Art at UCLA, and is a visiting professor of photography at Princeton University.

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 (except First Thursdays). Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website:
thewadsworth.org.

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