



Wadsworth Atheneum receives \$21,000 from the NEA to Support its MATRIX Exhibition Series

HARTFORD, Conn., January 3, 2012 – The Wadsworth Atheneum has received \$21,000 from The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to support its landmark MATRIX exhibition series, which features emerging and under-recognized contemporary artists. This grant will fund exhibitions from April 1, 2012 – March 31, 2013.

At its inception in 1975, the MATRIX series aimed to provide a showcase for the most recent trends in contemporary art in dialogue with the traditional art offerings of an encyclopedic art museum. Still relevant after thirty-six years, the MATRIX series' core mission remains the same: the innovative, museum-quality presentation of exceptional work by emerging artists from around the globe. The first series of its kind, MATRIX has inspired innumerable similar programs across the country and has developed a reputation for providing the first one-person museum show for many important artists.

“We are thrilled to once again have the support of the NEA, an original funder of MATRIX back in 1975 and a continued sponsor for a number of years.” said Patricia Hickson, the museum’s Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art. “The NEA’s generous award confirms and acknowledges the ongoing importance of this groundbreaking program that became a national model for project-based contemporary art exhibitions presented within the context of encyclopedic museums.”

On view for approximately four months, MATRIX exhibitions are presented in a dedicated 1,200-square-foot gallery, but, in the flexible spirit of the program, the projects have also been realized in other spaces, throughout the museum, and outside its walls in the community. Each exhibition is accompanied with a sixteen-page color “artist sheet” with an essay by the curator, images, exhibition checklist and artist’s curriculum vitae. In addition, public programs are developed for each exhibition, with a focus on artist participation. Artist lectures and gallery talks have been the typical form of programming. As part of the museum’s Community Engagement Initiative many MATRIX artists also participate in an artist residency to make relevant connections working with different local community groups.

Within the MATRIX framework, the goal has been to present a balance of two approaches—exhibitions that have a direct cultural connection with the greater Hartford community and those that introduce our audience to important new work from the contemporary art world that they might otherwise never encounter. Additionally, the MATRIX model offers a full range of art and artists in terms of gender, race, nationality, media, and subject matter. Given the museum’s proximity to Manhattan, there is a concerted effort to seek artists outside of the New York gallery scene.

The NEA grant will fund in part the following MATRIX exhibitions: *Jan Tichy / MATRIX 164*, on view April 5 – August 5, 2012; *Ahmed Alsoudani / MATRIX 165*, on view September 6, 2012 – January 6, 2013; and *Deb Sokolow / MATRIX 166*, on view February 7 – June 2, 2013.

The largest grant-maker to arts organizations, the NEA received 1,686 eligible applications in March 2011 for Art Works, a grant category which supports a wide array of arts organizations, requesting more than \$84 million total in funding. The resulting funding rate of 49 percent of eligible applications reflects both the significant demand for support and the ongoing vitality of the not-for-profit arts community despite current financial challenges.

The NEA presented 863 grant awards, which total \$22.543 million and encompasses 15 artistic disciplines and fields, and support projects in 47 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. For a complete listing of projects recommended for Art Works grant support, please visit the NEA web site at arts.gov.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is located at 600 Main St., Hartford, Connecticut. The Museum is open Wednesdays to Fridays, 11 am – 5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am – 5 pm, and the first Thursday of every month 11 am – 8 pm. Please visit wadsworthatheneum.org for more information.

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