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**MATRIX 179 at Wadsworth Atheneum Marks US Museum Premier
for British Artist Conrad Shawcross**

Hartford, Conn. (June 13, 2018) – Conrad Shawcross (b. 1977) is the featured artist in the 179th installment of the MATRIX contemporary art series at the Wadsworth Atheneum, his first museum exhibition in the Americas. Well known in the United Kingdom and the youngest member of the Royal Academy (admitted in 2013), Shawcross creates large-scale sculptures that push the boundaries of physics, technology and geometry. MATRIX 179 showcases the artist's recent work, combining the immense outdoor sculpture "Monolith (Optic)" (2016) with two mid-size sculptures, several maquettes and project drawings, artist interviews and a new shadow-producing light machine inside the museum. The exhibition is on view June 21-Sept. 9, 2018.

MATRIX 179 is a compact study of Shawcross's work from the past five years, in which industrial robotics are "hacked" to create an aesthetic environment through balletic movement; mathematics and sound are mapped in solid forms; and the materiality of built solids are challenged by illusion. The indoor installation will fill three rooms, the first featuring three metal sculptures and a set of related drawings embracing the ephemeral effects of light and sound. In the second, the machine-based, robotic "Slow Arc X" (2018) will fill the gallery with patterned shadows as a dual-ended light source revolves slowly and precisely inside two overlapping metal cages. The final room, a related, adjacent installation of studies and maquettes, connects the exterior component of MATRIX 179, the colossal "Monolith (Optic)," with the history and impact of public sculpture in Hartford's downtown.

"Monolith (Optic)" (2016) is a faceted steel construction that uses moiré patterns to capture and refract light. The nearly 20-foot-tall sculpture relates to the monumental "The Optic Cloak" (2016), standing at 160 feet tall, which Shawcross designed to disguise the flues of a low-carbon district heating plant on London's Greenwich Peninsula. On loan from a private collection for the next three years, "Monolith (Optic)" will be installed on the west lawn of the Wadsworth Atheneum's Morgan Memorial, at short distances from other major outdoor sculpture projects in Hartford's downtown, including Alexander Calder's "Stegosaurus" (1973), Carl Andre's "Stone Field Sculpture" (1977) and the museum's "Amaryllis" (1965) by Tony Smith.

Public Program Highlights

MATRIX 179 opens June 21 with the museum's free "Sculpture Celebration" featuring sculpture demonstrations (2-4 p.m.), a communal outdoor art activity (3-5 p.m.), "Ask About Art: Sculpture" docent-led conversations (4-5 p.m.), opening reception (5-6 p.m.) and a gallery talk with Conrad Shawcross at 6 p.m. Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art Patricia Hickson will give a gallery talk Aug. 3 at noon; talk is included with museum admission.

Exhibition Support

The MATRIX program is generously supported by the Wadsworth Atheneum's Contemporary Coalition. Major support for MATRIX 179 provided by the Talcott Stanley Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust. Exhibition program support provided in part by the Frazar B. Wilde, Jr. Trust. Sustaining support for the Wadsworth Atheneum provided by Newman's Own Foundation and the Greater Hartford Arts Council's United Arts Campaign.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continuously 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. Hours: Wednesday–Friday: 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Admission: \$5–15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free "happy hour" admission 4–5 p.m. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

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