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Major Work by British Artist William Turnbull Joins the Wadsworth’s Sculptures on Main Street

Hartford, Conn. (Sept. 19, 2019)— Earlier this week the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art installed Large Horse (1990) one of the largest and most archetypal works by acclaimed twentieth century artist William Turnbull (1922–2012). Also on view is a selection of eight drawings he made between 1950 and 1957. “Art has the power to humanize the urban environment with sculpture having a distinguishing public art role throughout history,” says Thomas J. Loughman, Director and CEO of the Wadsworth. “We are delighted to work with the Turnbull Studio in creating this major addition to the cityscape, particularly as the world is rediscovering Turnbull’s work.”

The Wadsworth has been placing sculpture on Main Street for a century beginning with Enoch Woods’ sculpture honoring Nathan Hale which was installed in 1894 and has been on view ever since. Large Horse (1990) by Turnbull joins Tony Smith’s Amaryllis (1965), Conrad Shawcross’ monumental steel Monolith (Optic) (2016), and Woods’ Nathan Hale (1889) on the museum’s front lawn.
Turnbull’s casting repertoire began in the early 1950s when his most frequent subjects included bronze masks, heads, and horses. *Large Horse* (1990) is the product of a late-career return to these three dominant themes. On loan to the Wadsworth from the artist’s estate, the nine-and-a-half-foot bronze is the largest cast metal sculpture Turnbull made. Of the five *Large Horse* bronzes cast, this is the only one on view in the United States. It evokes an adze—a tool similar to an axe with a blade perpendicular rather than parallel to the handle—the horse’s head recalling the blade and the arcing neck, the handle. In the artist’s words, “What interests me…is how the part can represent the whole. I mean that when you see the horse’s head you feel the whole horse…And when I make horses’ heads…it’s always been with the idea of having a metaphoric quality.”

A temporary installation of eight works on paper, also on loan from the artist’s estate, went on view Thursday, September 19, 2019. The large-format drawings chronicle Turnbull’s transition from an early linear approach, when he was constructing sculptures of plaster over wire, to working more volumetrically, sculpting with cast metal. The drawings in graphite, ink, and paint are from the critical period between 1950 and 1957. During this time, he developed his own visual language evoking primeval idol forms which materialize in both his two- and three-dimensional works of art.

**About the artist**
Born in Dundee, Scotland, William Turnbull (1922–2012) began his career with DC Thompson comics, before serving as a Royal Air Force pilot during World War II. He subsequently studied painting and sculpture at the Slade School of Fine Art (London), before moving to Paris in 1947 where he had close contact with a circle of artists that included Fernand Léger, Alberto Giacometti, and Constantin Brancusi. Following his first major exhibition in London at the Hanover Gallery in 1952, Turnbull pursued a lauded career with many international exhibitions, including a major retrospective at the Tate in 1973, an exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery in 1995, and an indoor/outdoor retrospective at Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 2005. In North America, his major sculptural works can be found at the Getty Museum (Los Angeles) and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo).

**About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**
Founded in 1842 with a vision for infusing art into the American experience, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is home to a collection of nearly 50,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years and encompassing European art from antiquity through contemporary as well as American art from the 1600s to today. The Wadsworth Atheneum’s five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival, modern International Style, and 1960s Brutalism—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Wednesday–Friday: 11am–5pm; Saturday and Sunday: 10am–5pm Admission: $5–15; discounts for members, students and seniors.


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