

# NORTON SIMON MUSEUM FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

411 West Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena, California 91105 [www.nortonsimon.org](http://www.nortonsimon.org)

Public Affairs Department 626.844.6941 [media@nortonsimon.org](mailto:media@nortonsimon.org)

January 2013

Media Contact:

Leslie Denk, Director of Public Affairs

[media@nortonsimon.org](mailto:media@nortonsimon.org) (626) 844-6900

## Beyond Brancusi: The Space of Sculpture

April 26, 2013 – Jan. 6, 2014

**Pasadena, CA**—The Norton Simon Museum presents “Beyond Brancusi: The Space of Sculpture,” an exhibition that examines how the great sculptors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both directly and indirectly, were influenced by Constantin Brancusi and his groundbreaking use of space and material. Featuring 19 works from the Museum’s renowned collection of post-war art, by sculptors as diverse as Henry Moore, Isamu Noguchi, Barbara Hepworth, Donald Judd, Carl Andre, John McCracken and Robert Irwin, the exhibition demonstrates how sculpture moved from being a self-contained, three-dimensional object to one that engages with its surrounding space. In a variety of ways and in a variety of materials, including marble, wood, stainless steel, felt or Plexiglas, the sculptures on view illustrate some of the most innovative moments in art making in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The exhibition is on view from April 26, 2013, through Jan. 6, 2014, in the Museum’s temporary exhibition gallery.



*Duo*, 1973

Barbara Hepworth (English, 1903-1975)  
Marble

A: 20 x 9-1/4 x 5-1/2 in. (50.8 x 23.5 x 14.0 cm);  
B: 14 x 6 x 8-1/2 in. (35.6 x 15.2 x 21.6 cm)

Norton Simon Art Foundation  
© Bowness, Hepworth Estate

Romanian-born and Paris-based, Brancusi was arguably the most influential sculptor of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His artistic inquiries into abstraction and representation, into mass and space, into craft and materials, serve as the foundation on which later artists dealt with these transformative issues. Indeed, Brancusi set up an important dichotomy when he embraced an intense understanding of his materials and worked them to a high degree of finish, always by hand, as in his masterpiece *Bird in Space* from 1931, on view in the Museum’s 20<sup>th</sup>-century gallery. But most significantly, Brancusi was the first artist to approach sculpture as a work

integral to its environment. “I don’t care what they reflect,” the artist once mused of his artworks, “as long as it is life itself.” “Beyond Brancusi: The Space of Sculpture” presents signature works from the Norton Simon collections that exhibit these creative breakthroughs. While the featured works were made over a 30-year span, in several different countries and using a variety of materials, each can be seen as drawing on Brancusi’s revolutionary relationship to space.

The exhibition begins with the works of renowned artists Henry Moore (English, 1898–1986), Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988) and Barbara Hepworth (English, 1903–1975), among others. Just a generation younger than Brancusi, these artists introduced space *into* their compositions by using holes or assembling elements around negative space. For example, supple curves reveal a dramatic cavity in Moore’s *Reclining Form* from 1966, demonstrating the artist’s concerns in balancing the physical permanence of the material with the buoyancy deliberately created by the space below and within it. Hepworth’s *Duo* and *Two Forms (Green and Green)*, both from 1973, display the artist’s significant interest in piercing holes into her forms. These material absences literally and metaphorically open each mass, where the work becomes about both the object and the opening, with neither assuming a hegemonic role over the other. The graceful marble lattice that defines Noguchi’s *The White Gunas* from 1946 makes the space between the carved forms as important as the stone itself. Further, the triangular placement of the three main verticals denies a front or back, requiring the viewer to move around the work and thus redefine it from differing viewpoints.

The exhibition continues with works made of non-traditional materials—often industrial—such as metal, felt, Plexiglas and coated glass. Donald Judd (American, 1928–1994), Robert Morris (American, b. 1931) and Carl Andre (American, b. 1935) all employed an aesthetic that removed their work from anything narrative or based in nature. And while they each had differing opinions as to the meaning of their sculpture, they engaged space even more aggressively than the previous generation. Judd’s *Untitled* from 1969 consists of 10 stainless-steel units, coated in blue Plexiglas, stacked vertically onto a wall, thus integrating space directly into the piece. The number of stacks varies depending on the height of the ceiling (this installation features 8 of 10), but the spaces between them remain consistent: they are the same distance apart as they are tall. Judd’s sculpture presents a visual paradox—light and open on the one hand, durable and inaccessible on the other. In Morris’s *Untitled*, also from 1969, five regular horizontal slits, cut into a large swath of industrial felt, allow the work to cascade rhythmically to the floor. Over time, the gaps between the felt grow, changing the appearance of the object and the indication of space around it. Wanting his materials to be straightforward

and unmitigated, Morris nevertheless was able to transform a raw manufactured product into an object of grace and beauty.

The exhibition concludes with a grouping of works by Southern California artists who introduced experimental materials and expanded the relationship between sculptural object and space even further. Robert Irwin (American, b. 1928), DeWain Valentine (American, b. 1936), Craig Kauffman (American, 1932–2010) and Helen Pashgian (American, b. 1934) introduced light and its reflection into their work, as well as a perceptual aspect aimed at the viewer, often fusing space and object. For example, Irwin's *Untitled* from 1969 plays with perception in such a way that the distinctions between solid and void—that is, of form and space—are utterly blurred. In this piece, a painted metal disc is mounted nearly two feet from the surface of the wall, and yet it disappears into it; the form has become visually part of its surrounding space. Valentine's *Large Wall* from 1968 is a monument to the atmosphere of sea and sky. Its transparency and its scale also reflect the artist's pursuit of sculpture that becomes "involved with both the inside space and the outside space or surface—where most sculpture visually stops." Pashgian's *Untitled* from 1969 uses resin with a bent acrylic rod at its center to give the work greater dimension. While Brancusi's finish was intended to reflect the surrounding world, Pashgian's aim was to consider the interior of the work: in the light it absorbed, in the space it created and in the nature of its purity.

"Beyond Brancusi: The Space of Sculpture" is organized by Associate Curator Leah Lehbeck. A series of related programs will be presented. Dan Flavin's 1966 sculpture "*monument*" on the *survival of Mrs. Reppin* is on view at the Museum from March 8 through Aug. 19, 2013. More information can be found at [www.nortonsimon.org](http://www.nortonsimon.org).

### **About the Norton Simon Museum**

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

**Location:** The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit [www.nortonsimon.org](http://www.nortonsimon.org). **Hours:** The Museum is open from noon to 6 p.m. every day except Tuesday and noon to 9 p.m. on Friday. **Admission:** General admission is \$10 for adults and \$7 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 6 to 9 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** The City of Pasadena provides a shuttle bus to transport passengers through the Pasadena Playhouse district, the Lake Avenue shopping district and Old Pasadena. A shuttle stop is located in front of the Museum. Please visit [www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus](http://www.cityofpasadena.net/artsbus) for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) for schedules.