

IMA COMMISSIONS SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATION BY ROBERT IRWIN IN HONOR OF ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY

Giant Light Sculpture to be Centerpiece of Museum Atrium

Indianapolis, IN, July 29, 2008—A three-story fluorescent light installation by **Robert Irwin** will be unveiled as a commission in honor of the Indianapolis Museum of Art's 125th anniversary this October. As the IMA's newest and largest addition to its fast-growing contemporary art program, Irwin's untitled abstract sculpture—made of fluorescent light and scrim material—was specifically designed for the Museum's main 60-foot atrium Pulliam Great Hall. The commission is funded in part through a gift from Ann M. and Chris Stack, longtime supporters of the IMA's contemporary collection.

Robert Irwin's *Light and Space III* will transform the experience of entering the Museum's galleries. Created in response to Pulliam Great Hall, a 60x60-foot screen will stretch across three adjacent planes by the main escalators. A series of white floor-to-ceiling scrim panels will bracket five channels of fluorescent light mounted in a grid-like pattern across the wall surfaces. Visitors will be blanketed by a tunnel of light as they move between the three gallery levels of the IMA. The commission will be unveiled as part of a gala celebration in honor of the IMA's 125th anniversary on October 11, 2008.

"We are thrilled to have this opportunity to commission a site-specific work by renowned artist Robert Irwin," said Maxwell L. Anderson, the Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the Indianapolis Museum of Art. "Its prominent location in the IMA's Pulliam Great Hall ensures it will become a part of every visitor's experience at the Museum. I can't think of a better way to kick off the celebration of our 125th anniversary."

The IMA's robust contemporary art program is evolving as a model for encyclopedic museums as they engage the art of our time. With a renewed focus on its contemporary collection, the IMA has been actively seeking out works of new and emerging artists through both gift and acquisition, and in addition organizing major traveling exhibitions and commissioning site-specific installations. In the past five years, the IMA has received more than \$17 million in endowment funds supporting its contemporary programming, an amount which is unparalleled for an encyclopedic museum in the United States.

"This new commission places work by one of the most important living American artists at the heart of our institution. Irwin's abstract work comprised of light, scrim and space demonstrates how versatile and transformative abstraction has become and how it can change the way we perceive our embodied relationship with what surrounds us," said Lisa Freiman, senior curator of contemporary art at the IMA. "Irwin's subtle yet powerful work is an ideal choice for a corridor that connects art from different cultures and time periods."

About Robert Irwin

Robert Irwin is one of the most pivotal artists in recent American history. He began his career working with abstract expressionist techniques and then investigated the premises of minimalism. Between 1966 and 1969, in an effort to create works that would "dissolve" into their environment, Irwin developed a series of now iconic untitled convex discs, such as the one included in the IMA's permanent collection, that were meant to sit 72 inches above the ground against a blank white wall. The discs were evenly cross-lit with incandescent lamps (two in the ceiling and two on the floor) that created a symmetrical shadow pattern that appears to be

approximately 10 feet high and wide. The final work consists of the wall, the shadow and the disc itself, demonstrating a powerful “presence.” Irwin has since won an international reputation for his site-specific public works, which often make intimate use of site conditions, architecture, natural elements, plantings and topographic features. Irwin was born in 1928 in Los Angeles, and received his art education at Otis Art Institute, Jepsons Art Institute and Chouinards Art Institute. Irwin’s more recent works include *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, the gardens at Dia: Beacon, and The Central Garden at the Getty Center.

IMA Information

Encompassing 152 acres of gardens and grounds, the IMA connects visitors to its unique and expansive view of art with its Indianapolis Museum of Art, the future Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park and Oldfields–Lilly House & Gardens. The Indianapolis Museum of Art is the fifth largest encyclopedic art museum in the United States and features significant collections of African, American, Asian, European, contemporary and decorative art, including paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings and photographs, textiles and costumes.

The IMA completed a \$74 million expansion project in May 2005 that featured three new wings, 50 percent more gallery space, expanded educational spaces, two new restaurants by Wolfgang Puck Catering and an enhanced museum store. The construction added 164,000 square feet to the Museum and includes renovation of 90,000 square feet of existing space. In order to present major exhibitions of its own and to accommodate major traveling exhibitions, the expanded Museum was outfitted with new 10,000-plus square foot Clowes Special Exhibition Gallery on the Museum’s first gallery level.

Located at 4000 Michigan Road, the IMA and Lilly House are open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The IMA is closed Mondays and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s days. For more information, call 317-923-1331 or visit www.imamuseum.org.

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