

# PRESS RELEASE

FEBRUARY 23, 2017

Press Contact

**Rachel Eggers**  
Manager of Public Relations  
rachele@seattleartmuseum.org  
206.654.3151

## **SEATTLE ART MUSEUM DEBUTS LARGEST ITERATION OF JOHN GRADE'S SCULPTURE—*MIDDLE FORK***

Massive installation created from a cast of an old-growth tree spans entire length of museum's Brotman Forum



SEATTLE  
ART  
MUSEUM

ASIAN  
ART  
MUSEUM

OLYMPIC  
SCULPTURE  
PARK

1300 First Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98101

206.625.8900

[seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)

SEATTLE, WA - The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) presents *Middle Fork*, a large-scale sculpture by Seattle-based artist John Grade. Now in its largest iteration yet—more than doubling from its previous length of 50 feet to 105 feet—the tree sculpture now dynamically spans the entire length of the Brotman Forum, the main entrance lobby that welcomes guests to the museum.

The highly detailed sculpture was created by Grade, his team, and a cadre of volunteers using a full plaster cast of a living old-growth western hemlock tree found in the Cascade Mountains east of Seattle. The cast was used as a mold to assemble a new tree from now nearly one million reclaimed cedar pieces. Suspended horizontally from the museum's ceiling and above the viewer, Grade's sculpture offers a mesmerizing new perspective on a familiar form.

With its exhibition at SAM, *Middle Fork* returns home to Washington State. The work was first conceived and built at MadArt Studio and had its Seattle debut there in January 2015. Following that, it was included in the *WONDER* exhibition at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC (November 13, 2015–May 13, 2016) and was recently displayed at the 2017 Davos World Economic Forum in Switzerland.

With each iteration, *Middle Fork* has “grown” larger and added more branches. The artist plans over time to continue the sculpture's growth to match the length of the living tree that it is based on, 140 feet. Eventually, he plans to bring the sculpture back to the forest, allowing it to decompose and return to the earth at the base of that original tree.

### ABOUT JOHN GRADE

John Grade (American, born 1970 in Minneapolis, MN) lives and works in Seattle, Washington.



Inspired by changing geological and biological forms and systems in the natural world, John works with his studio team to create large-scale site-specific immersive sculptural installations. Impermanence and chance are often central to the work, along with kinetics and relationships between the natural world and architecture. His small-scale sculptures and works on paper often follow the completion of large-scale installations and investigate alternative directions that his larger sculptures might have taken.

In the midst of a series of projects related to trees, John spends as much time as possible amongst Bristle Cone Pines in the Nevada Great Basin and closer to home in old-growth groves in the Olympic and Cascade Mountains. He is currently working on a three-year project documenting and modeling changing landforms above the Arctic Circle with a particular interest in pingos, tundra polygons, peat mounds and palsas.

John is the recipient of the 2010 Metcalf Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (NY), a Tiffany Foundation Award (NY), three Andy Warhol Foundation Grant Awards (NY), two Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grants (NY), the 2011 Arlene Schnitzer Prize from the Portland Art Museum (OR), and the 2013 Arts Innovator Award from Artist Trust (WA). For more information, please visit [johngrade.com](http://johngrade.com).

#### EXHIBITION SUPPORT

Special funding for this installation was provided by

**The Gurvich Family,  
In honor of Max and Helen Gurvich**

Lead Sponsors

 **Weyerhaeuser**

**Grace A. Arnold and Lauren Arnold Gorter,  
In honor of Robert M. Arnold**

**Alison and Glen Milliman**

Major Sponsor

**The Jon and Mary Shirley Foundation**

Photo credit: Benjamin Benschneider

#### **ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM**

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Robert Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and reopened as the Asian Art Museum in 1994. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrate their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures and time periods.