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CONTACT: Eric Brockman, Marketing and Communications Manager
937-512-0142 (direct office) | ebrockman@daytonart.org

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THE DAYTON ART INSTITUTE OPENS 2017 SPECIAL EXHIBITION SEASON WITH KAY WALKINGSTICK: AN AMERICAN ARTIST

Retrospective of contemporary Native American artist on view February 11–May 7

(DAYTON, OHIO) – January 27, 2017 – The Dayton Art Institute opens its 2017 special exhibition season with a major retrospective of contemporary Native American artist Kay WalkingStick, on view at the museum from February 11 through May 7.

The exhibition, which originated at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), was co-curated by Kathleen Ash-Milby (Navajo), Associate Curator, and David Penney, Associate Director for Museum Scholarship at the Smithsonian’s NMAI. Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist is organized by the American Federation of Arts and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian.

Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist features about 60 of her most notable works, drawn from public and private collections across the country and from the collection of the artist. The special exhibition demonstrates the breadth of WalkingStick’s achievements and her contributions to American art. While WalkingStick’s work has been widely exhibited and discussed, this touring retrospective will be the first survey of her singular career.
“We are thrilled to participate in this important, traveling retrospective, and are proud to further the exhibition’s mission by presenting the multidimensional artworks of Kay WalkingStick within the context of The DAI’s encyclopedic collection,” said Katherine Ryckman Siegwarth, in-house curator for The Dayton Art Institute.

*Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist* surveys the career of one of today’s most accomplished Native American artists and a leading practitioner of contemporary landscape painting. Over the course of four decades, WalkingStick has tirelessly explored her own complex cultural identity, engaging Native American history along with feminism, Minimalism, and other key art historical movements. She is particularly renowned for her majestic and sensual landscapes, which imbue natural scenery with the charge of personal and collective memory. In addition to tracing WalkingStick’s artistic journey, this exhibition offers a fresh perspective on issues of race, identity, and national history that are central both to contemporary Native American art and to American culture at large.

“The AFA is proud to work with the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian on this wonderful and timely exhibition that enriches our understanding of American contemporary art,” stated Pauline Willis, Director of the AFA. “We are thrilled to be able to share it with audiences across the nation.”

The online art magazine *Hyperallergic* recently named the exhibition one of the **best exhibitions of 2016** in the United States.

The artist will be at The Dayton Art Institute to **present a talk about her art on Thursday, February 9, at 6 p.m.** in the Renaissance Auditorium. Admission to the talk is $5 for museum members and $10 for non-members. A special non-member combo ticket is available for $25 and includes admission to the special exhibition and a reception following the talk. For more information and reservations, call 937-223-4ART (4278) or **visit the museum’s website**.

WalkingStick’s biography is intimately tied to her art. The exhibition examines key moments of her life, which further illuminate the artist’s methods and motivations. As a young artist in the 1960s and 1970s, she created bold, graphic paintings using a color-blocking technique, eschewing modeling in favor of expanses of flat hues.

By the mid-1970s, WalkingStick shifted away from the figure and toward abstraction; at the same time, she grew increasingly interested in her Native American heritage. During this period, she researched American Indian history and made paintings in homage to famous Native figures such as Chief Joseph, the great Nez Perce leader, and Sakajawea. Many of these are marked by thickly impastoed, sculptural surfaces, achieved by scratching and manipulating layers of acrylic paint mixed with wax.

During the 1980s, WalkingStick returned to figuration through diptychs in which she paired abstract and naturalistic representations of the same landscape, charting her travels throughout the United States and around the world. This format, which WalkingStick has continually developed and returned to, has become her hallmark. Shortly after beginning to work in diptychs, WalkingStick suffered a devastating personal loss and her art became more volatile, dark, and intense.
Beginning in 1996, WalkingStick’s extended trips in Italy gave her the opportunity to study that country’s landscapes and art. During this period, she produced sensual paintings and drawings, often embedding personal narratives about sexuality, memory, and the body in representations of architecture and nature. The influences of Greco-Roman and Italian Renaissance art can be seen in decorative motifs; in the use of new materials, such as gold leaf; and in the Mediterranean views that frequently appear. WalkingStick’s sketchbooks, several of which are included in this exhibition, also document her travels in Italy and beyond, attesting to her deft ability to weave together disparate influences.

Over the past two decades, WalkingStick’s interests in landscape, the body, and history have merged in majestic and often monumental compositions. While the diptych format still appears, it does not dominate or dictate her mature practice. References to specific places—often sites laden with historical associations—have become more common and many works indulge, simply and unapologetically, in the beauty of the natural world.

WalkingStick’s most recent paintings synthesize themes that she has explored throughout her career, joining rugged Western scenery with decorative motifs drawn from local Native peoples. These paintings unite figuration and abstraction, Western and Native aesthetics, and personal and collective memories. Through the variety and sustained quality of her paintings and drawings over four decades, WalkingStick has challenged reductive understandings of what contemporary Native art can be.

“We’re honored to be one of only two Midwestern institutions to host this important exhibition,” said The Dayton Art Institute’s Director and CEO Michael R. Roediger. “The DAI, as a civic museum, is committed to being inclusive of all, and this exhibition offers broad appeal for those interested in Native American art, contemporary art, or landscape painting.”

The Dayton Art Institute’s presentation of Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist receives support from Benefactor Sponsor DP&L Foundation, Patron Sponsor PNC, and Supporting Sponsors Abbott Nutrition, Miller-Valentine Group and Wanda and Bill Lukens, with additional support from Jessup Wealth Management, Perfection Group, and University of Dayton. JPS Preview Reception Sponsor is Bank of America.

In conjunction with the special exhibition, The Dayton Art Institute will also reopen its gallery of Native American Art. Kay Koeninger, Professor of Art History at Sinclair Community College, assisted with the reinterpretation of the gallery, which was made possible by Ohio State Capital Appropriations funding The Dayton Art Institute received in 2016. Located in Gallery 209 in the Great Hall, the new display features pottery, textiles, basketry, and other artworks. Koeninger will present a special Curatorial Conversations program about the newly reopened gallery on March 30, at 6 p.m.

Other events and programs related to Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist include:

- Kay WalkingStick Artist Lecture, February 9, 6–7 p.m.
- REACH Across Dayton Conference, February 24 (at Sinclair Community College)
- Behind the Scenes of Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist, March 23, 4–5 p.m.
- ARTventures: Native American Inspiration, April 8, 1–3 p.m.
- Draw from the Collection, April 15, 1–3 p.m.
Curatorial Conversations Exhibition Tour, April 20, 6–7 p.m.
ARTventures: Terrific Textiles, April 22, 1–3 p.m.

For more about the exhibition and related programs, visit daytonartinstitute.org/kaywalkingstick. Use the hashtag #KayWalkingStick to join the conversation on social media. An accompanying exhibition catalogue, available for purchase at The DAI’s Museum Store, features essays by numerous authors, including the artist herself.

Admission to Kay WalkingStick: An American Artist is free for museum members. Non-member admission is $14 adults; $11 seniors (60+), students (18+ w/ID), active military and groups (10 or more); $6 youth (ages 7-17); and free for children (ages 6 & under). Prices include admission to the special exhibition and the museum’s permanent collection. Docent-led tours are available for individuals, groups and schools. For more information or to schedule a tour, contact Rique Hagen, at 937-223-4278, ext. 332 or schooltours@daytonart.org.

Tickets for the exhibitions and related programs may be purchased at the museum’s Guest Services Desk or by phone at 937-223-4ART (4278) during regular hours, or online at daytonartinstitute.org. Connect with The Dayton Art Institute on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest for additional information, behind-the-scenes photos and exclusive offers.

EXHIBITION CREDIT
The exhibition is organized by the American Federation of Arts and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian.

ABOUT THE DAYTON ART INSTITUTE
As one of the Miami Valley’s premier fine art museums, The Dayton Art Institute offers a full range of programming in addition to exhibiting its collection. Gallery hours are Wednesday – Saturday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon – 5 p.m., with extended hours until 8 p.m. on Thursdays. Suggested general admission to the museum’s permanent collection is $8 adults, $5 seniors, active military and groups. Admission is free for museum members, students (18+ w/ID) and youth (17 and under). Some special exhibitions, programs and events may carry an additional charge and include admission to the museum’s permanent collection as part of that price. Free parking is available at the museum and the facility is fully accessible to physically challenged visitors. The DAI’s Museum Store is open during regular museum hours. Leo Bistro serves lunch Wednesday – Friday, 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., and Sunday, noon – 3 p.m. Leo Bistro also serves dinner on Thursday evenings, 4:30 – 7 p.m. For more information, please visit www.daytonartinstitute.org or call 937-223-4ART (4278). The Ohio Arts Council helped fund this organization with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The DAI also receives support from the Montgomery County Arts and Cultural District.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS
The American Federation of Arts is the leader in traveling exhibitions internationally. A nonprofit organization founded in 1909, the AFA is dedicated to enriching the public’s experience and understanding of the visual arts through organizing and touring art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishing exhibition catalogues featuring important scholarly research, and developing educational programs. For more information about the AFA, visit www.amfedarts.org.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere—past, present and future—through partnership with Native people and others. For additional information, visit AmericanIndian.si.edu.

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