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Pfaff Installation

PRESS RELEASE

For release 11/15/00

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If I Had a Boat

Visitors to the Elvehjem in the spring will find themselves in the midst of a fascinating installation by a major international artist. The large-scale, site-specific installation will remain in Paige Court through August 12. The Elvehjem is one of the few museums in Wisconsin with the physical space necessary to house one of Pfaff's expansive installations. The installation in Paige Court permits viewing her work from all sides and above from the upper gallery railing.

Although Judy Pfaff has created more than thirty large-scale installations in two and a half decades, most located in major cities, she has frequently selected the university setting to create, install, and exhibit her work. As professor of art and co-chair of the Bard College Art Department, Pfaff is vitally concerned with the visual education of students and their exposure to the best in the contemporary arts.

In preparation for her installation here, she worked with blueprints supplied by the Elvehjem to create a mockup of Paige Court in her studio, an old tug-boat factory in Kingston, N.Y. Her initial concept drawing showed a maze that incorporated plants. She arrived in Madison at the beginning of August with her truck containing her studio on the road-welders, plate-roller, drill press, work benches-and a crew of four. She brought steel mechanical tubing that forms the basis of the completed structure, two-part expandable foam, steel cable and ball chains to suspend the lead balls that she cast on site, electrical wire for suspending light fixtures, and plants.

Pfaff did additional drawings on location to clarify her evolving ideas as she responded to the Elvehjem architecture. On site, she dealt with the physical limitations of the building. Unable to drill into the masonry of the courtyard walls, she suspended all the steel tubing and used lead balls as counterweights to keep tubing plumb. These functional lead balls have, as

well, an aesthetic component, catching the eye and providing tactile stimulus.

As her concept for the space evolved, she and her crew, supplemented in Madison by three assistants, worked twelve-hour days through August into the first week of September to transform Paige Court into an interactive installation. She had two principal areas for construction, a fenced space on the plaza between the Elvehjem and the Humanities Building and in Mayer gallery. Within the museum, the crew cut and ground the steel tubing, then welded it into units. Once the tubing was fitted in place, the crew cleaned it and applied cold copper patina to surfaces. Judy Pfaff was involved in every stage of the construction, working along side the crew to implement her creation. The complexity of her design presented numerous technical challenges that drew upon the expertise of various UW physical plant departments, including electrical, machine, sheet metal, and campus services.

Pfaff's installation, *If I Had a Boat*, will be joined by *The Art of Judy Pfaff*, a related presentation of prints and sculptures in galleries VI and VII opening April 28, 2001. Although known for her three-dimensional work—sometimes using and moving off a wall, sometimes freestanding, sometimes filling a room with small objects, Judy Pfaff began making prints in 1985 at Crown Point Press; recently she has worked at University of Wisconsin's Tandem Press. The exhibition includes prints from the Elvehjem's permanent collection, particularly those prints created by Pfaff at Tandem Press, and sculptures on loan, many from the artist.

This preeminent contemporary artist is a pioneer in the fields of installation art and multidimensional printmaking, who challenges traditional artistic processes and media. She has participated in Biennial Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art and has exhibited at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, the University of Massachusetts Art Gallery, and the Hirshhorn Museum, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington D.C.

The Elvehjem is publishing a fully illustrated catalogue to accompany and document both the installation in Paige Court and the works in the galleries, with an essay renowned scholar Irving Sandler. This installation has been made possible by generous contributions from Anonymous Fund, Hilldale Fund, Brittingham Fund, and an in-kind contribution from Qual Line Fence Corporation.

The Elvehjem Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9-5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11-5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located at 800 University Avenue on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the Murray Street (north) entrance. Parking is available at the city of Madison's Lake Street and Frances Street ramps, university lot 46 on Lake Street between Johnson and University Avenue, university lot 47 on Johnson Street between Park and Lake streets. Evening and weekend parking is also available under Grainger Hall with entrance on Brooks Street between University Avenue and Johnson streets. The Elvehjem Museum of Art will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, 608 263-4421 (voice).

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