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Sculpture Garden

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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**Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
at Sculpture Garden Opening**

MRS. CLINTON: Good morning. Good morning. Oh please be seated. We're so pleased to have you on this glorious day here at the White House. It is always a pleasure to have guests and particularly those who have come from other parts of the country to be in Washington. And today it is especially a pleasure to have so many friends and lovers of art as we celebrate the second exhibition of contemporary American sculpture in the First Lady's Garden.

At a time of great debate about the role of art in society, I am particularly pleased that we can showcase American Art and artists at the White House. The president and I have always believed that art is not a marginal part of our culture nor a luxury that should only be accessible to those who can afford it. Art evokes our emotions and provokes our ideas. It enlarges our understanding of the world around us. It tells us who we are and what we can be and it ought to be experienced and shared by all Americans.

The twelve pieces assembled for this exhibition represent American sculpture since 1965. Like the sculptures in the first exhibit which some of you saw while they were on display in the fall, these sculptures embody the rich diversity of American artistic tradition and reflect the power of creative expression in our culture. I hope that you and the tens of thousands of visitors and guests who pass through here over the next few months will feel the same sensations of joy, excitement, inspiration, and intrigue, and challenge as I do looking at these particular sculptures.

I often come here at twilight after I try to do my daily exercise and sit and look at these sculptures as I did at the first ones that were here and find myself constantly being motivated and enjoying greatly the gifts that all of you have helped make possible. I hope that in seeing this exhibit all Americans will be reminded of the vital role that art plays in strengthening the democratic ideals upon which our nation is founded.

As some of you know, the idea for this exhibition was inspired in part by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. My all too brief friendship with her left a lasting impression on me as it did on so many others. It is a fitting tribute to her and

the extraordinary contribution she made to the White House to keep alive her appreciation of the arts through this ongoing exhibition of contemporary American sculpture.

Many people have helped us realize this dream. And I am so pleased that today we are able to again thank some of you who have worked hard over the last years to take an idea and translate it into reality. Once again, I want to thank the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation for their extraordinary support of this exhibition and for sculpture in general. Thank you. Iris, stand up. I also want to thank the Committee for the Preservation of the White House and the White House Historical Association some of whose members I see in the audience and I'd like to ask all the members of these important organizations to please stand and be recognized.

I owe a special debt of thanks to J. Carter Brown who has helped to shepherd this idea and to Rex Scouten, curator of the White House, both of whom have been extraordinarily helpful. I am so personally pleased to welcome back George Newburt, the director of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden at the University of Nebraska who curated the first exhibit and got us off to such a great start when we began with sculptures from the midwest.

Today it is a special honor and pleasure for me to thank the curator of this exhibit, someone whom I have known for a long time, admired and appreciated, and had nothing to do with his selection. The Association of Art Museum Directors, in its wisdom, chose Townsend Wolfe, the director and chief curator of the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock, to be the curator of this exhibit and we are very excited about that, Townsend. Thank you so much.

I would also like to thank Betsy Braun, the director of the National Museum of American Art, and Larry Rieger for their efforts to save and preserve our nation's outdoor sculptures through the Save Outdoor Sculpture Program which they have helped to implement.

The twelve sculptures behind me are from the southeast and they focus on American Sculpture from 1965. I am very grateful to the institutions which have lent their sculptures to this exhibit. It is not an easy decision to make.

I know that there are many of you here in this audience who are devoted benefactors and enjoy greatly the works in the institutions who are participating and we are so pleased that you would be willing to do this.

I'm also delighted that we have some of the artists with us who created these sculptures and, in fact, I think we have eight

of the eleven living artists with us and we thank them for adding beauty to our daily surroundings, for preventing us from becoming complacent about the lives we lead and the world we live in, and I would like all the artists who are with us to please stand for a moment.

This is a very exciting time for us in our country as we confront very challenging decisions about the kind of people we are, the kind of society we wish to have, the country that we will live in as we move into the 21st century and I am grateful that so many of you here for this ceremony are people who have supported the arts in your local communities and throughout the country. It is a major contribution that you make, not only to the arts but to the quality of our life together. And I would like now to invite you to again walk through the garden and then join me in the Blue Room upstairs for a reception, then in the State Dining Room. Thank you all very much. (Applause)

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