

NEWS RELEASE

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Chesterwood Announces New Exhibition
Created in Collaboration with the Boston Athenæum
Daniel Chester French: The Female Form Revealed will be on view
at the Boston Athenæum from Oct. 7, 2016 – Feb. 19, 2017

Stockbridge, Mass. (Sept. 30, 2016) – Chesterwood announces a new exhibition, *Daniel Chester French: The Female Form Revealed*, created in collaboration with the Boston Athenæum, where it will be on view from Oct. 7, 2016 – Feb. 19, 2017. An exhibition opening reception will be held on Thursday, Oct. 6 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Boston Athenæum, located at 10½ Beacon St. The event is free of charge and open to the public. Reservations are not required.

Daniel Chester French: The Female Form Revealed explores French's representation of the female figure primarily through a group of preliminary models and studies, created not only for major public commissions, but also for a number of his more intimate and personal works. Many of the works on view have never before been exhibited to the public. The approximately 50 works in the exhibition are from Chesterwood's collection, along with a work recently acquired by the Boston Athenæum.

The exhibition is co-curated by David B. Dearing, Director of Exhibitions and Susan Morse Hilles Senior Curator of Paintings & Sculpture at the Boston Athenæum, and Donna Hassler, Director of Chesterwood and Administrator, Historic Artists' Homes and Studios Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

For nearly half a century, from the late 1870s to the late 1920s, Daniel Chester French (1850-1931) was America's foremost sculptor of public monuments. His outdoor masterpieces can be seen in the cosmopolitan centers of New York, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, D.C., as well as in smaller American towns such as Concord, Mass., Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and Lincoln, Neb. French's projects adorn civic spaces including New York's Central Park, Boston's Public Garden, and Washington's Dupont Circle; are focal points on college and university campuses at Harvard, Columbia, Bowdoin, and Gallaudet; enhance the facades of grand Beaux-Arts structures such as the United States Custom House in New York, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Boston Public Library; and are focal

points in some of this country's great historic cemeteries such as Woodlawn in New York, Graceland in Chicago, and Forest Hills in Boston.

Many of French's public works depict or otherwise commemorate historical figures. These range from his heroic allegory, *The Minute Man*, created in 1875 for the town of Concord, to grand-manner portraits, such as the colossal figure of *Abraham Lincoln*, executed in 1922 for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. French's fame for these male-oriented masterpieces is well deserved, but in fact he was equally proficient at modeling the female figure, especially in its classicizing, idealized form.

"This aspect of his career has been little studied," said Hassler. "Our goal with this exhibition is to help fill that gap in the scholarship of Daniel Chester French's *oeuvre*."

Characteristically, French's female figures are allegorical. Often idealized, seductively posed, and classically draped, they typically memorialize great human actions, events, or emotions. They fulfill their purpose not through portraiture but by means of a more sensual, tactile, and cerebral narrative. As an American classicist who trained in Europe, French looked first to the visible world for inspiration; but he always improved on what nature provides in order to achieve an ideal beauty in three-dimensional form. This was especially true of his interpretations of the female face and body. In fact, feminine beauty in allegorical form was often at the forefront of French's work, even the public ones.

An illustrated catalogue will accompany *Daniel Chester French: The Female Form Revealed*, with an essay by Dr. Dearing and a checklist of the exhibition's contents. The exhibition will be enhanced with a series of lectures, curator-led gallery talks, and an online version of the installation.

The exhibition and its published catalogue are made possible by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Chesterwood, a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is the summer home, studio and gardens of America's foremost sculptor of public monuments, Daniel Chester French (1850-1931). French is best known for his sculptures of the *Minute Man* (1871-75) in Concord, Mass., and the seated figure of *Abraham Lincoln* (1911-22) for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC.

Situated on 122 acres in the idyllic hamlet of Glendale near Stockbridge, Mass., the property and its buildings were donated to the National Trust for Historic

Preservation by French's only child Margaret French Cresson (1889-1973).
Chesterwood is recognized as both a National Historic Landmark and a
Massachusetts Historic Landmark. 4 Williamsville Rd., Stockbridge, Mass. (413)
298-3579. www.chesterwood.org

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