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**New outdoor sculpture by Tom Otterness will honor the memory of Joan S. Beren**

A new outdoor sculpture at Wichita State University will honor one of WSU's strongest fine arts supporters, the late Joan S. Beren. The sculpture, to be called "Shockers," also will celebrate the agrarian roots that led to the naming of WSU's mascot.

Beren's son, Adam, and daughters Amy Bressman and Julie Platt worked with the Ulrich Museum of Art and the WSU Foundation to commission the piece by New York artist Tom Otterness, well known for his "Millipede" sculpture at WSU and a recent traveling exhibit on campus called "Makin' Hay."

In her lifetime, Joan Beren was an ardent champion of WSU and, in particular, the school's Martin H. Bush Outdoor Sculpture Collection. She endowed a fund to help preserve the collection during her lifetime and provided a generous estate gift to endow what is now called the Joan S. Beren Outdoor Sculpture Conservation Fund.

The Beren, Bressman and Platt families along with the Joan S. Beren Foundation will contribute funds to pay for the new sculpture.

"We feel like this will be the perfect complement to mom's Sculpture Conservation Fund and we just know mom would be pleased and proud to have her name associated with this important work," Bressman said.

"Our mother was an extraordinary person and it will take an extraordinary work of art to honor her in a fitting and enduring way. I think 'Shockers' fits the bill," said Adam Beren. Platt added, "Mom would be delighted to know that Tom Otterness will create this piece in her memory, as she admired him and his work."

The massive piece, about 16-feet-high, will depict two figures side by side, one holding a scythe

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and both appearing to survey the field work around them. In that ‘field’ will be stylized bales of real prairie hay. The figures will be made of weathered steel covered partly by hay. It will be highly reminiscent of “Makin’ Hay,” which features three large figures working in a hay field.

“With the departure of ‘Makin’ Hay,’ we were looking for something that would personify the Shocker spirit and that whole notion of agrarian roots and summers spent working in the fields before returning to college,” said Ulrich Director Bob Workman. “I think this work captures that sense perfectly.”

Wichita State’s mascot grew from the tradition of students in the early 1900s who “shocked” or harvested wheat during summers to help pay for college.

The new sculpture will be installed in a large grassy area near Duerksen Fine Arts Center. Because hay used in the piece must be replenished each year, Workman hopes to create a festive fall event where students will be invited to participate in the re-haying.

“Joan supported Wichita State in many ways, but our sculpture collection was especially dear to her,” said WSU Foundation President Elizabeth King. “Adding an important piece to that collection, by such a well-regarded artist, truly captures her essence in a meaningful way.”

Otterness has been called one of the world’s greatest sculptors of public art, with his outdoor pieces often described as cartoonish or playful.

“I believe ‘Shockers’ will be one of the most important sculptures on campus,” Workman said. “I was so fond of Mrs. Beren and feel blessed to be able to honor her with this special sculpture.”

He hopes the sculpture will be in place and ready for dedication in fall 2018 or spring 2019.

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**Media note:** Photos of Joan S. Beren and a drawing of the “Shockers” sculpture may be found at [www.wichita.edu/foundationphotos](http://www.wichita.edu/foundationphotos)

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