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CONTACT:

Allison Inman, Marketing & PR Coordinator

adinman@ncarboretum.org

(828) 665-2492 x204

The N.C. Arboretum Announces Olmsted Sculpture Commission

**ASHEVILLE, NC –** The North Carolina Arboretum is pleased to announce plans for a newly commissioned sculpture by renowned artist, Zenos Frudakis. The work will honor Frederick Law Olmsted, the father of American landscape architecture, whose vision for the most comprehensive arboretum in the country served as the impetus for The North Carolina Arboretum.

The depth and breadth of Olmsted’s interests fueled his multifaceted career. His early studies and experiences encompassed surveying, engineering, chemistry, journalism, economics, management and farming. A six-month walking tour of numerous parks and private estates throughout England and the British Isles provided the content for his first book, “Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England,” and helped shape his early perspective on landscape design.

In 1858, Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, an accomplished English architect, won the design competition for New York City’s Central Park. The design—Olmsted’s first—is heralded even today for its architectural ingenuity and positive socioeconomic impact.

Through his holistic approach to design, Olmsted created harmonious compositions that addressed ecological, economic, social, and aesthetic issues with equal consideration. He viewed his profession as an intrinsic method for creating a robust sense of community, and his extensive writings on design served as a primer for the modern day principles of landscape architecture.

Extraordinary in its conception and scope of vision, Olmsted’s approach is evident in the more than 500 commissions carried out by his firm during his career. Among those projects are campus designs for forty academic institutions, including Stanford University. The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University is heralded as one of the finest examples of Olmsted’s work, and has been designated a National Historic Landmark.

Olmsted’s final grand project brought him to the mountains of North Carolina during the late 19th century. Having been hired by George Vanderbilt to design a landscape equally matched to the grandeur of his Asheville home, Olmsted recognized the potential to transform the land, damaged and worn from years of farming and logging. Inspired by the array of indigenous flora, Olmsted envisioned the property as home to the most comprehensive arboretum in the country. Surrounded by the lush folds of the botanically diverse Southern Appalachian Mountains, the arboretum at the Biltmore Estate was proposed to be a model for scientific research and experimentation.

Though Olmsted’s plans for the Biltmore Arboretum were never realized, his vision lives on at The North Carolina Arboretum, established in 1986 by the North Carolina General Assembly. From supporting new plant-related sustainable economic sectors, to educating the public about landscape design and plants, to serving as a location for natural beauty and connection with the outdoors, the Arboretum elevates the aesthetic, cultural, and economic quality of life in North Carolina and beyond.

As an affiliate of the 17-campus University of North Carolina system, the Arboretum seeks to create innovative educational experiences, foster regional and global partnerships, and stimulate economic opportunities. Exhibits and programs for all ages aim to increase science literacy and encourage environmental awareness. Research in agriculture, natural biotechnology, and energy conservation responds to the rapidly changing, knowledge-based global economy.

Art at The North Carolina Arboretum honors and preserves the unique cultural and natural heritage of the region. The collection and exhibits, inspired by the land, the people and the creative process, brings art and craft into public spaces, stimulating thought and imagination. The Olmsted sculpture by Zenos Frudakis will join more than 200 works in the Arboretum’s collection.

Zenos Frudakis discovered his passion for sculpture as a young child, shaping scraps of dough his mother gave him as she prepared bread for baking. Over the past two decades, Frudakis has created works for public and private collections throughout the U.S. and abroad. A grant recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts, he has executed commissions ranging from golf professional Payne Stewart at Pinehurst Resort to the National Air Force Memorial Honor Guard Sculpture at Arlington National Cemetery. His monumental works capture the expressiveness and vitality of their subject. One such piece, “Freedom,” a 20-foot long work of bronze in Philadelphia, is a composition of four figures that, when viewed from left to right, depict in painstaking detail the struggle to break free as a figure tears himself from the shroud-like wall that once ensconced him.

“The North Carolina Arboretum is both excited and honored to become the home of a defining sculptural representation of Frederick Law Olmsted,” said George Briggs, Executive Director of the Arboretum. “Who better to carry the artistic responsibility than Zenos Frudakis, one of America's most noted sculptors whose portfolio includes a vast array of distinguished societal leaders? We are delighted to have the opportunity of pairing these two giants – Olmsted and Frudakis -- within their respective generations and art forms for the enjoyment and education of our visitors and students.”

The project is scheduled to begin June 30, 2014 and is expected to require 16 months to complete. Funding for the project was made possible by a generous donation from John and Muriel Siddall. Each year as many as 490,000 visitors experience the Arboretum’s gardens, trails, exhibits, shows and expos, educational programs, demonstrations and lectures. The Arboretum’s ability to meet its mission and enrich the visitor experience is made possible by a community of supporters—from members, volunteers and staff to state and local funds, tribute gifts, grants, and community partners.

For more information, please call (828) 665-2492 or visit [www.ncarboretum.org](http://www.ncarboretum.org). The central mission of The North Carolina Arboretum, an affiliate institution of the 17-campus University of North Carolina system, is to cultivate connections between people and plants.

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