

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**15 FEBRUARY 2018**

### **THE FACE OF THE NGA TO CHANGE WITH BARNETT NEWMAN SCULPTURE**

The National Gallery of Australia is celebrating the installation of Barnett Newman's ground-breaking sculpture, *Broken Obelisk*, outside the Gallery's main entrance in Canberra. The display of this well-known, gravity-defying work reflects the dynamic and evolving face of Australia's iconic national art institution and foreshadows *American Masters*, the NGA's upcoming major exhibition of its unrivalled collection of 20th century American masterpieces, opening 24 August.

'Barnett Newman is one of the most prominent figures in Abstract Expressionism', said Gerard Vaughan, NGA Director. 'We are thrilled by the generosity of the Barnett Newman Foundation in lending this extraordinary sculpture to the heart of Canberra. The NGA is world-famous for its collection of 20<sup>th</sup> century American art, and it is fitting that this iconic sculpture has transformed the entrance to the Gallery as a signpost to the great treasures of the New York school installed inside.'

With the installation of *Broken Obelisk*, the NGA aligns itself with its international counterparts in displaying one of the most significant works of modern sculpture. *Broken Obelisk* is one of four versions in existence. The first two sculptures, conceived in 1963 and produced in 1966–67, are on display at the Rothko Chapel, Houston and the University of Washington's Red Square; the third version, made in 1969, takes pride of place in the open courtyard of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.

A monumental sculpture created with rough weathering steel, *Broken Obelisk* represents the American artist at his best. The sculpture features an inverted obelisk with a broken shaft balancing—almost impossibly—on a pyramid. Technically and aesthetically impressive, this enormous work of art, which measures 7.5 metres in height and weighs 2.7 tonnes, is a feat of ingenuity and engineering.

*Broken Obelisk* is on loan to the NGA thanks to the generosity of the Barnett Newman Foundation.

'It is very pleasing for the Barnett Newman Foundation to lend a piece of American art history to Australia's national capital,' said Heidi Colzman-Freyberger, Executive Director of the Barnett Newman Foundation. 'The NGA's commitment to post-war modern American art is unrivalled in the Asia-Pacific region, and the loan represents an important moment in celebrating this great artist for both Australia and the United States.'

The arrival of *Broken Obelisk* has changed the face of the NGA. George Baldessin's beloved *Pear – version number 2* will enjoy a new position in the Australian Garden after a brief

hiatus. The relocation of Thankupi's *Eran* has further reinvigorated the NGA Sculpture Garden.

This loan was made possible thanks to the generosity of the American Friends of the National Gallery of Australia.

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

Megan Reeder Hope

Communications Manager

National Gallery of Australia

E: [megan.reederhope@nga.gov.au](mailto:megan.reederhope@nga.gov.au)

T: 02 6240 6700 M: 0435 103 735