Defying Gravity: An Historic Achievement in Glass Featuring Josh Simpson

Thursday, November 8, at 7 p.m.

Defying Gravity: An Historic Achievement in Glass Featuring Josh Simpson follows renowned glass artist Josh Simpson as he crafts the largest glass object of his career: a luminous 100-pound Megaplanet. Cameras capture every step of the year-and-a-half process from commission to creation. Viewers see Simpson’s studio in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, and observe Simpson and his team at work as Simpson talks about the physical and mental challenges of creating the Megaplanet. The film features interviews with the makers of custom tools required for the project; Simpson's triumphs, disappointments, technical obstacles, and inspiration, and the grand unveiling of the Megaplanet at the Corning Museum of Glass in New York.

The special screening is offered as a complement to the Museum’s current exhibition, Josh Simpson: Galactic Landscapes, a solo show of innovative works on view through January 6, 2019. Exemplifying the intersection of art and science, the exhibition focuses on works that embody the artist’s fascination with astrophysics, deep space, and the
Galactic Landscapes features 30 of Simpson’s imaginative Planets – solid glass spheres that suggest distant worlds and landscapes. There are also 14 large-diameter glass platters, 14 to 18 inches across, full of swirling textures and colors that evoke nebulae, colliding stars, and other astronomical events. There are also two platters that incorporate a Saturn-like sphere in the center and two extraordinary bowls. The centerpiece of the gallery is an original Orrery, a moving, mechanical model of the solar system, made in collaboration with artist Erik Van Cort, that incorporates Simpson’s glass spheres as the sun, the planets, and their moons.

Josh Simpson has been a glass artist since 1971, maintaining a studio in Shelburne Falls in western Massachusetts since 1976. There he uses ancient glass-blowing tools and techniques along with his own inventions and high-tech engineering to create his glass. Simpson’s glass has been shown in many museums and galleries across the U.S. and internationally. Examples of major works are included in the collections at the Corning Museum of Glass, the White House Collection of American Crafts at the Clinton Library, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C., the Yale University Art Gallery, the Mint Museum of Craft and Design in Charlotte, NC, the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, MA, as well as many other museums in the U.S. and around the world.

About the Berkshire Museum
Located in downtown Pittsfield, Massachusetts, at 39 South St., the Berkshire Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is $13 adult, $6 child; Museum members and children age 3 and under enjoy free admission. For more information, visit www.berkshiremuseum.org or call 413.443.7171.

Established by Zenas Crane in 1903, Berkshire Museum integrates art, history, and natural science in a wide range of programs and exhibitions that inspire educational
connections between the disciplines. National Geographic Rarely Seen: Photographs of the Extraordinary is on view through January 6, 2019. Josh Simpson: Galactic Landscapes is on view through January 6, 2019. Curiosity Incubator and Objects and their Stories are now on view. Little Cinema is open year-round. Lab 102, Feigenbaum Hall of Innovation, Worlds in Miniature, Aquarium, and other exhibits are ongoing.

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