Berkshire Museum

Leonardo da Vinci: Machines in Motion Opens February 9
Delay from Government Shutdown Ends
Museum will be closed Jan. 29-30 for Exhibit Installation

[PITTSFIELD, MA] – Leonardo da Vinci: Machines in Motion will open Saturday, February 9, at the Berkshire Museum after museum officials succeeded in getting the exhibit out of the George H.W. Bush Library in Texas, a move that had been blocked by the ongoing federal government shutdown.

Leonardo da Vinci: Machines in Motion features 40 full-size working models of Leonardo da Vinci’s innovative designs, from flying machines to an early robot. Each mechanism is accompanied by Leonardo’s drawings and a descriptive narrative of his life. The exhibition is a Feigenbaum Innovative Experience, which is a multi-year series of engaging, interdisciplinary programming, generously sponsored by the Feigenbaum Foundation.

The exhibition originally was scheduled to open at the Berkshire Museum on January 26th. It has most recently been on view at the George H.W. Bush Library in College Station, Texas. Until this week, exhibition coordinators had been unable to get into the Library to remove the exhibit and bring it to Pittsfield, because the Library has been and remains closed due to the federal government shutdown. The Board and staff of the Bush Library and Berkshire Museum came to a solution together that allowed the exhibition to be deinstalled without the assistance of furloughed federal employees.

“We are ecstatic that after a short delay we will be able to present Leonardo da Vinci: Machines in Motion at the Berkshire Museum. Five hundred years removed, his drawings, designs, and machines continue to invoke curiosity and wonder. Few
creative bodies of work can speak to and represent the Museum’s mission as well as that of Leonardo da Vinci. The experience is a bit like stepping into the mind of the genius. Kids and adults, alike, are going to love it!” said Craig Langlois, Chief Experience Officer.

The 40 machines were meticulously crafted by scientists and skilled artisans in collaboration with the Leonardo da Vinci Museum in Florence, Italy, and inspired by designs from the Renaissance thinker’s notebooks. The exhibition includes several large-scale models including a life-sized armored tank and a glider. The models are fabricated with careful attention to the types of materials that would have been used in Leonardo’s era and are described in his manuscripts. Faithfully adhering to artist’s instructions and utilizing the tools of his time, they are hand-crafted with wood, rope, and glue. Graphic displays and videos explain the life and legacy of Leonardo, and provide context for his inventiveness and designs. The History Channel video, Da Vinci & The Code He Lived By, will be playing in one of the galleries.

The machines in the exhibition are grouped into four sections, based upon their relevance to the four elements — fire, water, earth, and air — each which held a strong fascination for Leonardo da Vinci.

Under “fire,” there is a cannon, a machine gun, and an armored vehicle: a moving wooden battle tank large enough for visitors to step inside. The “water” segment features machines that use water pressure to relay energy as well as equipment intended to enable a man to walk on water and a large webbed glove, similar to a flipper, meant to accelerate swimming. Under “earth,” there is a crane, the printing press, the oil press, theatrical machines, and even a robot. Fascinated by flight, Leonardo’s drawings related to “air” invite visitors to discover several types of flying machines, from the ornithopter (a device with mechanical wings), to an early type of hand glider, to a parachute, and even a flying bicycle.

Please note that to accommodate the installation; the Museum will be closed all day on Tuesday, January 29, and Wednesday, January 30.
About Berkshire Museum

Berkshire Museum is located at 39 South Street (Route 7) in Pittsfield, MA. The Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Admission is $13 adult, $6 child (under 18); free admission for Museum members, EBT cardholders, and children age 3 and under. For more information, visit www.berkshirmuseum.org or call 413.443.7171.

# # #