

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BARON BMW ANNOUNCED AS PRESENTING SPONSOR
OF BLOCH BUILDING OPENING**

Opening Day Set for June 9, with Landmark Inaugural Exhibitions

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art announced today Baron BMW of Kansas City will be the presenting sponsor of the Bloch Building opening. Support by Baron BMW will help underwrite an exciting sequence of opening events and activities for Museum members and the public culminating with the building opening Saturday, June 9.

The Nelson-Atkins expansion, designed by architect Steven Holl, is named for Marion H. and Henry W. Bloch, longtime supporters of the Museum and noted business and philanthropic leaders in Kansas City and beyond. Prior to the public opening June 9, the Museum will host *An Asymmetrical Evening*, an exclusive black-tie opening event for the Bloch Building, on Saturday, June 2. Baron BMW will be an important part of the evening.

“Baron BMW’s support of the Museum underscores the significant role companies can play in supporting the arts in Kansas City,” said Karen Christiansen, Chief Operating Officer for The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. “As presenting sponsor of the Bloch Building opening, Baron BMW will be part of a groundbreaking achievement for Kansas City, the region and, indeed, the global arts community.”

Baron BMW is one of the premier BMW dealerships in the country. Based in Merriam, Kan., it serves the entire Greater Kansas City metropolitan market, much like the Nelson-Atkins, which serves hundreds of thousands of visitors each year from all over the region and beyond.

“Being a part of the opening of the Bloch Building is an honor for Baron BMW,” said Barton J. Cohen, CEO and Chairman of Baron Automotive Group. “The Nelson-Atkins is a cultural pillar in this community, and we fully support its continuing commitment to inspire visitors through the visual arts.”

Free admission to the Museum will continue with this spring’s opening of the Bloch Building, providing visitors with complete access to new galleries dedicated to the Nelson-

Atkins' contemporary, African and photography collections. In addition, a tranquil sculpture court dedicated to Isamu Noguchi's work, new contemporary-ceramics cases and a gallery called Project Space, for exhibition of the latest contemporary works, will await visitors.

Two ticketed exhibitions will inaugurate the new H&R Block Featured Exhibition Galleries, which are more than 11,000 square feet. Both exhibitions celebrate two extraordinary collections founded and developed in Kansas City.

Manet to Matisse: Impressionist Masters from the Marion and Henry Bloch Collection

This exhibition of 30 masterpieces celebrates the Marion and Henry Bloch Collection of Impressionist paintings and is the first time this renowned collection has been shown publicly. Assembled in a span of more than 20 years, the collection is the result of careful research and consultation with curators and conservators to create an excellently balanced and maintained selection of the best works from this period in art history. Among famed works are Manet's *The Croquet Party*, van Gogh's *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières*, Gauguin's *The Willow* and Cézanne's *Man with a Pipe*, as well as major works by Monet, Renoir, Degas, Pissarro, Morisot and Sisley. The collection also contains important modern paintings by Bonnard and Matisse. This exhibition is sponsored by H&R Block Foundation.

Developing Greatness: The Origins of American Photography, 1839–1885

This large exhibition from the recently acquired Hallmark Photographic Collection surveys the remarkable achievements from the birth of photography in 1839 to the rise of the amateur in the mid-1880s. Key artists, themes and works of early American photography illuminate the many facets of 19th-century American thought and culture. Many rare and previously unpublished and unseen works, from daguerreotypes to dry-plates, will be presented to the public for the first time. This exhibition presents the definitive view of one of the nation's greatest holdings of early American photography. The show surveys a spectrum of American history, covering major themes such as the Civil War and the great Western landscape in particular depth. All major photographers of the period are represented, from Southworth & Hawes and Mathew Brady to Carleton Watkins and Timothy O'Sullivan. Portraits of notable personalities of the era, from Harriet Beecher Stowe and Jenny Lind to Frederick Douglass and Tom Thumb, also will be on view. This exhibition is supported by the Hall Family Foundation.

Museum Information and Hours

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is recognized nationally and internationally as one of America's finest encyclopedic art museums. With a permanent collection containing more than 34,500 works of art, the Nelson-Atkins is best known for its Asian art, European paintings, modern sculpture and now, with the acquisition of the Hallmark Photographic Collection, photography. The Nelson-Atkins is located at 45th and Oak streets, Kansas City, Mo. Hours are Tuesday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Admission to the Museum's collection is free to everyone. For Museum information, phone 816.751.1ART or visit the website at nelson-atkins.org.

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