

NEWS RELEASE

Dec. 15, 2015

FRED JONES JR. MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA - NORMAN
CONTACT: MICHAEL BENDURE, Director of Communication, (405) 325-3178, mbendure@ou.edu
FAX: (405) 325-7696
www.ou.edu/fjjma

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WITH IMAGE

Galileo Exhibit to Feature Books, Art at OU Art Museum Jan. 21

NORMAN, OKLAHOMA – All eyes are on the skies this spring as the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art presents *Galileo's World: An Artful Observation of the Cosmos*, a new exhibition that opens with a complimentary public reception at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 21.

In *Sidereus Nuncius (Starry Messenger)*, Galileo reported his discovery of four satellites of Jupiter and mountains on the moon. These telescopic discoveries would have been impossible were it not for Galileo's training and experience in Renaissance art. Presented in conjunction with *Galileo's World*, a University of Oklahoma cross-campus initiative, *An Artful Observation of the Cosmos* combines works from the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art's permanent collection with books from OU Libraries' History of Science Collections.

The exhibition also includes a replica of Galileo's telescope, on loan from the Museo Galileo in Florence, Italy.

"*An Artful Observation of the Cosmos* investigates the close relationship between art and science for much of the modern era," said Mark White, the Wylodean and Bill Saxon Director and Eugene B. Adkins Curator at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. "An exhibition like this is a wonderful example of the interdisciplinary approach to learning fostered at the University of Oklahoma. It is a real pleasure to work with the History of Science Collections staff to display these influential and engaging manuscripts."

The opening reception will include a 7 p.m. guest lecture by Eileen Reeves, professor and chair of comparative literature at Princeton University. Reeves has written extensively on Galileo's relationship to art, literature and the history of science, with published works including *Painting the Heavens: Art and Astronomy*

in the Age of Galileo and Galileo's Glassworks: The Telescope and the Mirror.

At 8 p.m., the museum will host a reception in the Sandy Bell Gallery featuring complimentary hors d'oeuvres.

"When Galileo peered through his telescope and discovered mountains on the moon, he did so because he was seeing with the eyes of an artist," said Kerry Magruder, OU Libraries History of Science Collections curator. "What a delight is it, then, to work with the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art in holding a joint exhibition that is a most significant addition to the *Galileo's World* endeavor."

Both early modern science and Renaissance art relied on new technology and innovative methods for the observation and study of natural phenomena. In this context, Galileo fashioned a telescope that, when combined with his artistic training, allowed him to scrutinize the moon and sky with unprecedented accuracy and to recognize the maculated surface of the moon as a cluster of craters and mountains. This led to the publication of his topographical studies in the *Sidereus Nuncius* (1610).

An Artful Observation of the Cosmos explores his influence and legacy in the inseparable link he helped to forge between art and science. Using observation to uncover the secrets of nature, Galileo had an unparalleled impact on astronomy.

"Through his telescope, Galileo did not immediately see craters and mountains; he simply observed changes and mutations in the appearance of the so-called 'spots,'" said Francesca Giani, exhibition co-curator. "Only his training in perspective and chiaroscuro, which other astronomers lacked, allowed him to link those spots to the effects of raking light over depressions and elevations on the surface of the moon. The resulting drawings were not simply transcriptions of what Galileo observed through his telescope, but extrapolation informed by his artistic skill and scientific knowledge."

The first section of the exhibit includes Renaissance treatises on optics, linear perspective and other disciplines that exemplify the humanistic training Galileo received at the Accademia delle Arti del Disegno in Florence, which he joined in 1613. These disciplines informed Galileo's study of the moon's topography and shaped lunar studies in subsequent centuries.

A second section of the exhibition includes many of the most significant responses to the *Sidereus* and culminates in the cultural fascination with the Apollo missions of the 1960s and 1970s, which advanced lunar study beyond the optical.

The final portion of the exhibit explores the ramifications of Galileo's and

Copernicus's theories on the perception of the cosmos. Stars were understood as bodies dispersed in a potentially infinite and largely unexplored space. Increased visual scrutiny of the skies led to a flourishing of star atlases and countless artistic treatments of the night skies. From the moon to the stars, *Galileo's World: An Artful Observation of the Cosmos* surveys the enduring human interest in the cosmos.

Galileo's World is a campus-wide collaborative exhibition with 20 exhibits at seven locations in Norman, Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Organized through the University of Oklahoma Libraries, the exhibition is open to the public through August 2016. Visitors are encouraged to visit www.galileo.ou.edu for more information about the exhibition and to confirm programming and event dates.

An Artful Observation of the Cosmos is on display through April 3, 2016, in the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art's Nancy Johnston Records Gallery. In addition to a family guide and reading rug with books inspired by the exhibition, a side gallery will feature a scratch board activity designed to emulate the engraving process that was popular with artists and scientists during Galileo's time.

Additional programs tied to the exhibition include Galileo After Dark, an evening talk discussing exciting recent discoveries in astronomy, followed by an indoor stargazing tour using the iPad Star Walk app on Jan. 28; Family Day on Feb. 7; a gallery talk with Giani on Feb. 16; and Galileo Live!, a curatorial presentation accompanied by string quartet music inspired by the stars on March 24.

More information about the exhibition and programs is available on the museum's website at www.ou.edu/fjjma.

The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is located in the OU Arts District on the corner of Elm Avenue and Boyd Street, at 555 Elm Ave., on the OU Norman campus. Admission to the museum is complimentary to all visitors, thanks to the generosity of the OU Office of the President and the OU Athletics Department. The museum is closed on Mondays. Information and accommodations on the basis of disability are available by calling (405) 325-4938 or visiting www.ou.edu/fjjma.

###

IMAGE CREDIT

A new exhibition of astronomical books and art related to the cosmos opens Thursday evening, Jan. 21, at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. *An Artful Observation of the Cosmos* combines books from OU Libraries with works from the

museum's permanent collection, including this 1969 lithograph, *Moon Shot*, by Lowell Nesbitt.

Lowell Nesbitt (U.S., 1933-1993)

Moon Shot, 1969

Lithograph, 22 x 30 in.

Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, The University of Oklahoma, Norman;

Gift of Reese and Marilyn Palley, 1991