RICHARD HUNT
LEGACY FOUNDATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: info@richardhuntsculptor.org

Chicago Children's Museum Unveils Richard Hunt *Sea Wall* Exhibit

The interactive exhibit, which opens on November 21, incorporates one of only two sculptures Hunt created specifically for children—encouraging a new generation to be inspired by the tools, methods, and influences that sparked Hunt's creative process.

(Chicago, IL, November 10, 2026) – Imagine a world-class, one-of-a-kind sculpture nearly being destroyed in a renovation, only to be saved by a forward-thinking employee who stored it in his garage for decades. *Sea Wall*, one of only two pieces world-renowned Chicago artist Richard Hunt ever made for children, was nearly lost. But, with luck, collaboration, and the support of those committed to Hunt's legacy, *Sea Wall* has been meticulously revitalized to once again be available for children to interact with and enjoy at Chicago Children's Museum (CCM) starting November 21 and will be a permanent museum experience.

"Given that *Sea Wall* was one of only two sculptures Richard ever created especially for children, it is wonderfully fitting that it now resides here at Chicago Children's Museum," said Natalie Bortoli, Vice President, Educational Programming & Experience Development, CCM. "We have worked to respect the original intentions of *Sea Wall* by providing children with a calming and curious hands-on exploration of the sculpture, while also creating an opportunity for them to get to know Richard Hunt and his story."

Originally created for the children's center lobby at the former Michael Reese Hospital in 1971, *Sea Wall* housed various aquaria for children to engage with while visiting the hospital. When the hospital was being renovated in the mid-2000s, a demolition contractor started cutting up *Sea Wall* to remove it. Oscar Edmond, a hospital employee, knew of Hunt's work and having recognized the piece, stopped them. He got permission from the hospital to salvage the piece. Edmond moved the parts to his home where he stored it until 2024 when he and his wife, Karen, began downsizing. During the process, they realized the sculpture was commissioned by the Ruttenberg family and decided to reach out to them.

The Ruttenbergs were given possession of the piece and in June 2024, the Ruttenberg family chose to bring the sculpture to CCM with the charge to restore and reimagine the piece as an interactive experience.

Now *Sea Wall* has been brought back to life for children and their families and caregivers to interact with for years to come. The newly imagined sculpture will feature multi-sensory activities inspired by the aquaria that were part of the sculpture in its original location including:

- Hands on activities, such as a "build your own diorama," sand spinner, and a mystery box with aquatic animals
- A miniature diorama of a water scene
- Calming displays of bubbles and a digital aquarium in a nod to *Sea Wall*'s history

Alongside the space there will be ceramic tiles featuring aquatic images and textures inspired by Richard Hunt and *Sea Wall* created in CCM's Art Studio by Chicago children. The exhibit will also feature a panel on Richard Hunt and his legacy, as well as a tactile experience using real artifacts from Richard's studio. Children will be able to see and touch tools Richard created by hand to serve his artistic vision, as well as explore the many ways he was inspired by the natural world.

"Hunt believed that swimming was perfectly analogous to flying, with both offering an experience of freedom," said Jon Ott, Executive Director of the Richard Hunt Legacy Foundation. "In *Sea Wall*, he fashioned an underwater landscape where the sculpture recedes into an artistic backdrop, setting children free to explore, play, and imagine in a world without weight."

Raised on Chicago's South Side, Richard Hunt graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he would later teach, and became one of the most influential African American abstract sculptors of the 20th century. Bringing *Sea Wall* to Navy Pier, where Hunt himself once exhibited and taught, ensures his life and art will serve as an enduring blueprint for childhood curiosity, creative freedom, and limitless aspiration.

The Richard Hunt Legacy Foundation played a critical role in providing information and artifacts for the exhibit. *Sea Wall* was also made possible by several funders including the Ruttenberg/Kagan Foundation and John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

To learn more about the *Sea Wall* exhibit at the Chicago Children's Museum, visit:
www.richardhuntsculptor.org/sea-wall

###

ABOUT CHICAGO CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

The mission of Chicago Children's Museum is to improve children's lives by creating a community where play and learning connect. CCM is a cultural institution dedicated to young children and the important adults in their lives. Playful experiences, including more than 15 interactive exhibits and daily programming, tap into how kids learn and engage to develop the foundation for a lifelong love of learning. Located at Navy Pier, Chicago's number one attraction at 700 E. Grand Ave., CCM is the final stop for CTA buses #29, #65, #66 and #124. For more information, please visit www.ChicagoChildrensMuseum.org.

ABOUT RICHARD HUNT

Richard Hunt (1935-2023) was a celebrated American metal sculptor who was the subject of more than 250 solo exhibitions, more than 500 group exhibitions, and featured as the first African American sculptor to have a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1971. His artworks are notable for widespread presence in more than 130 museum collections. Hunt made the largest contribution to public sculpture in the United States, with more than 160 commissions gracing prominent locations in 24 states and Washington, D.C.

Richard Hunt considered artistic freedom to be the most important aspect of his career: "I am interested more than anything else in being a free person. To me, that means that I can make what I want to make, regardless of what anyone else thinks I should make."

Richard Hunt served on dozens of boards, committees, and councils during his lifetime, including serving as a Commissioner for the National Museum of American Art, part of the Smithsonian Institution, and as the first African American visual artist to serve on the National Council on the Arts. In addition, Hunt received more than 45 major awards, including the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Sculpture Center, the Fifth Star Award from the City of Chicago, and the Legends and Legacy Award from the Art Institute of Chicago.

Among his works, Hunt paid tribute to some of his nation's greatest heroes, including Martin Luther King, Jr., Mary McLeod Bethune, Jesse Owens, Hobart Taylor, Jr., and Ida B. Wells-Barnett. In 2022, Hunt was the first artist to be commissioned to create a sculptural work for the Obama Presidential Center in Chicago. *Book Bird* (2023) now graces the Library Reading Garden outside the new Chicago Public Library branch on the Obama Presidential Center campus.

ABOUT THE RICHARD HUNT LEGACY FOUNDATION

The Richard Hunt Legacy Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that advances public awareness, education, and appreciation of the art and life of American sculptor Richard Hunt. The Richard Hunt Legacy Foundation's vision is to ensure that future generations fully appreciate Richard Hunt by encouraging, inspiring, facilitating, educating, and supporting the public's understanding of his work and his place in American and art history. In addition, the foundation aims to inspire the next generation of sculptors and artists.

More information about the Richard Hunt Legacy Foundation can be found on our website, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, and YouTube.

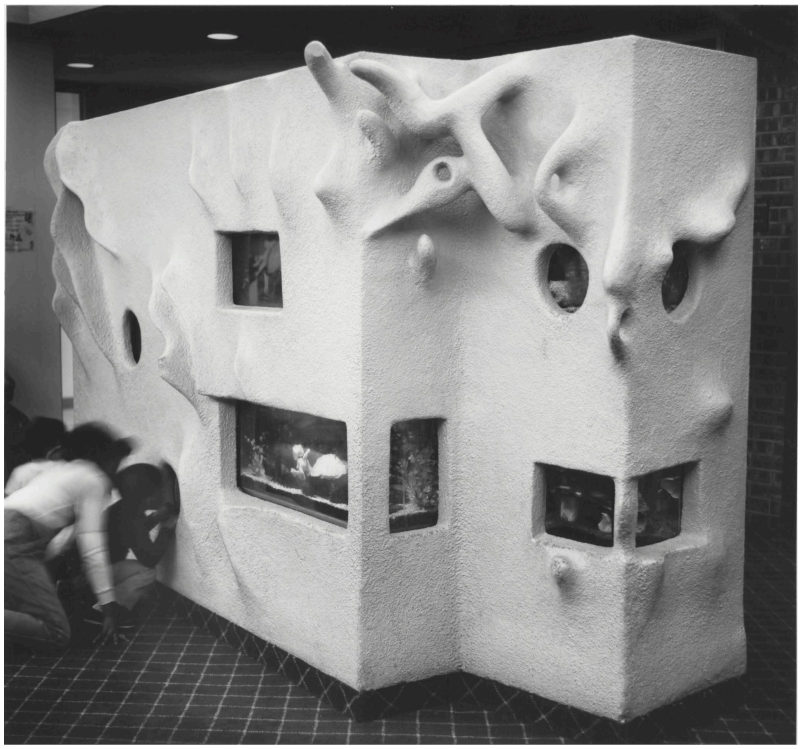
To explore our Bloomberg Connects digital guide, visit this link or scan the QR code.

Mailing Address:

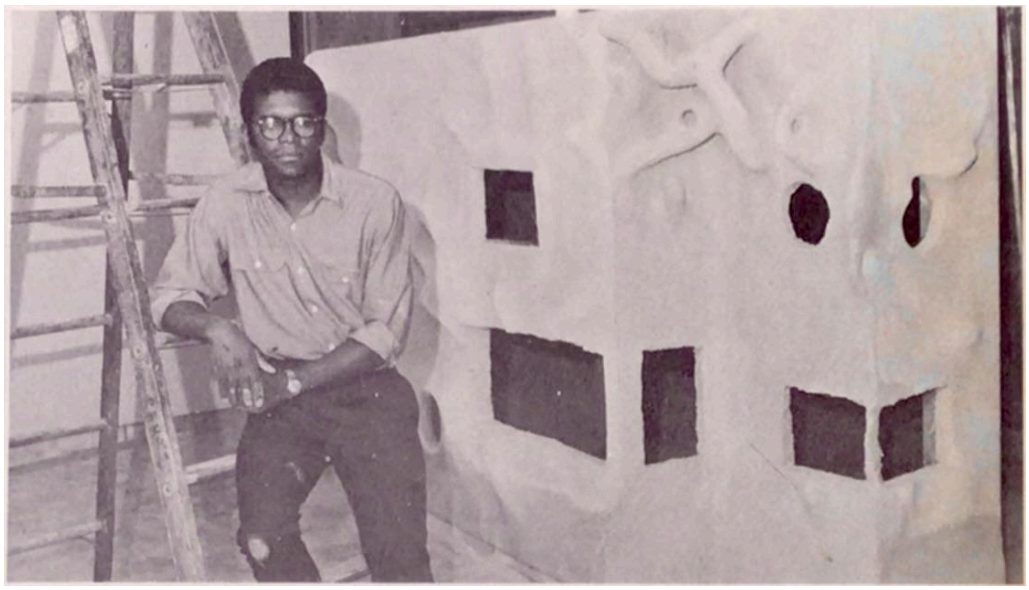
Richard Hunt Legacy Foundation
1449 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 13084
Chicago, IL 60605



Richard Hunt's *Sea Wall* at Chicago Children's Museum
Photo Credit: Chicago Children's Museum



Children exploring Richard Hunt's *Sea Wall* (1971), installed in the children's lobby at Michael Reese Hospital, Chicago, 1971.
© The Richard Hunt Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Richard Hunt with *Sea Wall* (1971), installed in the children's lobby at Michael Reese Hospital, Chicago. © The Richard Hunt Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York