

For Immediate Release  
North Dakota Museum of Art  
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## BARTON'S MAGICAL PLACE

OPENS AT THE NORTH DAKOTA MUSEUM OF ART

Barton Lidice Benes lived in a magical apartment in New York City. It was filled with over \$1 million in African, Egyptian, and contemporary art, plus much more as touted in the *New York Times* when it announced Barton's intended gift to North Dakota (2/6/05).

On Saturday, November 16 at 7 pm, the Museum will open a temporary installation in the Mezzanine Gallery that suggests the drama and mystery embedded in Barton's private wonderland. Barton Benes and his treasure trove spent decades tucked away in a glorious boxcar space in Westbeth, the artist community in New York's West Village. There, rare works of art joined ranks with the arcane, the wistful, the amusing, the deeply serious, and a "maddening and morbid array of things" (a human toe found on New York's Williamsburg Bridge, a stuffed mink wearing a mink coat, a two-foot hour-glass housing cremation ashes).

Barton once said, "Living in my apartment is like living in a seventeenth century curio cabinet." He continued, "My work has been attacked in British tabloids and featured on the cover of *ARTnews*. I've been fascinated by relics ever since I took a monk's bone from the catacombs in Rome in 1963. Then I went to Africa in 1970 and the real collecting began—under the guidance of dealer and friend Tom McNemar." Barton lived for sixty-nine years, always an artist, always an artist exploring what it means to be human. That is the overriding theme of his life's work and the thread running through Barton's Place, the Museum that evolved within that 850-square-foot space where he created the artworks that now grace museums and private collections around the world.

Reuter and Benes were introduced in 1987 by Harvey Hoshour, the architect who planned the original design for the renovation of the "1907 Women's Gym" on the campus of the University of North Dakota into the home of the North Dakota Museum of Art. Hoshour died before the renovation was complete so Reuter turned to artists to finish the building. Barton Benes designed the Museum Shop and later the Museum's Donor Wall. The new building opened in 1989 with a survey exhibition of Benes' art in the Mezzanine Gallery. Other exhibitions followed in 1995 and 2004.

In 1997, the Museum commissioned Benes to create a "flood museum" comprised of metaphor-laden, flood damaged objects contributed by the people of Grand Forks. The work, twenty-four-feet long and five-feet high, is divided into eighty pigeonholes, each containing a reliquary object such as the "favorite toy of flood kitten Iris who drowned but not before moving several kittens to

safety in a vent." The flood museum, *Ebb Tide*, will be installed on the outside wall of the reconstructed apartment along with three recent gifts from Lise Hoshour, wife of the architect Harvey Hoshour.

The transfer of Barton's Place from New York City to Grand Forks and the installation in the Museum was underwritten by Karen Stoker of Fargo with additional funding from James Cottrell and Joe Lovett, Barry and Bobbi Coller, David Hasbargen and Wayne Zimmerman, and Jerry Foote along with many others.

The apartment contents are on loan from the Trustees of the Barton Benes Living Trust. Because of limited space, the kitchen, studio, and bath from the 15 x 50 foot apartment are not included.

The North Dakota Museum of Art is located on Centennial Drive on the campus of the University of North Dakota. Hours are 9 – 5 pm on weekdays; 1 – 5 pm on Saturday and Sunday. Exhibition free and open to the public with recommended donations are \$5 for adults and change from children.