RELEASE DATE: April 30, 1998

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Debra Krittenbrink, 405/321-7374

"Big Bungalow Suite" Comes to Museum of Art

The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, 410 W. Boyd in Norman, invites you to step into the lush, overblown garden created by the exhibition, "Larger Than Life: Robert Rahway Zakanitch's Big Bungalow Suite." The series of enormous, 11-by-30-feet-long paintings of rich vegetation in vibrant, exhilarating color are on display May 15 through June 21 at the museum.

The canvases, which took four years to complete, are the culmination of more than two decades of Zakanitch's painting. They bear the artist's trademark flowing brushwork of abstract expressionism and the systemic composition of pattern and decoration painting. The "Big Bungalow Suite" melds these elements to reflect the domestic interiors of his childhood--floral rugs, painted plates and patterned linoleum floors. Composed of irregularly repeated floral elements and odd, window-like interruptions, the paintings are playful, fun-loving, and vigorous.

Robert Zakanitch, a New York artist who received a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Grant in 1995, was one of the leaders of the Pattern and Decoration movement in the 1970s. This informal group of artists challenged the prevailing aesthetic of cool, austere abstraction with works that evoked nature's abundance and the joy of painting. "I think art is about allure," he says. "My paintings have an in-your-face sentimentality, another word that has become negative. But sentimentality, for the most part, is humanizing, a state of deep caring."

"When I start painting, I would always take out anything that was about sweetness," he says. "I wanted those paintings to be tough and strong. But toughness is a

--more--
facade to cover up fear. It took me a long time to realize that the most difficult thing to do is make a sweet, pretty painting. That is truly tough."

"Larger Than Life: Robert Rahway Zakanitch's Big Bungalow Suite," organized by the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College, runs through June 21. A Family Day from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Sunday, June 7, will focus on the giant canvases and allow children and their guardians to create a group painting in the style of the artist.

Museum admission, and Family Day, is free. The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Thursdays, 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.; and Saturdays and Sundays, noon until 4:30 p.m. Parking is available on the campus's north oval with a museum parking permit, or in the Asp or Elm Street parking garages. For more information or accommodations on the basis of disability, call 325-3272 or visit the museum Web site, www.ou.edu/fjjma. 

###