

# NEWS RELEASE

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FRED JONES JR. MUSEUM OF ART  
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA - NORMAN  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Chernobyl Film, Panel Heats Up OU Art Museum Nov. 17**

NORMAN – Twenty years after a nuclear reactor malfunction exploded radiation into the night sky, Chernobyl continues to take its toll on residents of the Ukrainian city of Pripyat. Although more than 50 workers at the infamous reactor died immediately following the April 26, 1986, explosion, approximately 4,000 have died from the long-term effects of radiation poisoning over the past 20 years.

As part of its continuing Russian theme this semester, the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma looks into the worst reactor malfunction in the history of nuclear power with a public viewing of “The Battle of Chernobyl” by Thomas Johnson at 5:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 17.

“When I knew I was going to plan a semester around Russian art and U.S. – Russian relations, I knew I wanted to use the museum as a stage for interdisciplinary discussion,” said FJJMA director Ghislain d’Humières. “I couldn’t miss a good opportunity for students and the university community to view this eye-opening documentary, which was done two years ago to commemorate the 20-year anniversary of Chernobyl.”

Based on top-secret government documents that came to light only in the 1990s, during the collapse of the Soviet Union, “The Battle of Chernobyl” reveals a systematic cover-up of the true scope of the disaster, including the possibility of a secondary explosion of the still-smoldering magma, the radioactive clouds of which would have rendered Europe uninhabitable.

“Personally, I’ve seen the film five times, and every time it makes a strong impression,” said d’Humières. “I am moved by the true story of this tragedy. This documentary will give the perfect opportunity for an open discussion on nuclear environmental issues, the fall of communism, the manipulation of media and the future of humanity.”

The free film screening is followed by a discussion panel led by Katerina Tsetsura, assistant professor of strategic communication/public relations international outreach for the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma.

“This documentary is significant because, for the first time, it showed the truth about the world’s worst nuclear accident,” said Tsetsura. “Back in 1986, no one within or outside of the USSR really knew what happened and how the even bigger nuclear catastrophe was prevented in the weeks following the disaster. Hundreds of people sacrificed their lives and health in order to prevent the spread of the nuclear radiation. Stories of these people, masterfully portrayed in the documentary, are tragic reminders of how dangerous nuclear power can be.”

Special guest panelists include Shari Veil, assistant professor of strategic communication at the Gaylord College, who specializes in risk and crisis communication and organizational learning. She recently published an encyclopedia entry on crisis communication during the Chernobyl disaster.

Patrick Sullivan also will join the panel of guests. An OU chemistry graduate, Sullivan serves as an analytical chemist at Oklahoma City-based Astellas Pharma Technologies. During the Chernobyl disaster he was stationed in West Germany in the U.S. Army as a part of the 8th Infantry Division. One of his duties at the time was radiation detection for his individual unit. He recently returned from Ukraine, where he visited the Chernobyl Museum in Kiev.

Additional panelists include Boris Apanasov, professor of mathematics, and Dan O’Hair, professor of communication.

“The Battle of Chernobyl” premieres in conjunction with photography exhibition “Reflections: Russian Photographs 1992-2002” and “American Artists from the Russian Empire,” an international exhibition that opened Oct. 4. Both exhibitions, which remain on display through Jan. 4, 2009, are part of a larger schedule of Russian-themed programming at the museum.

The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art is located on the corner of Elm Avenue and Boyd Street, at 555 Elm Ave., on the OU Norman campus.

The museum’s Web site is [www.ou.edu/fjjma](http://www.ou.edu/fjjma). Information and accommodations on the basis of disability are available by calling (405) 325-4938.

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