Carefully crafted of natural materials that are often gathered impromptu on site, the sculptures of Andy Goldsworthy are meditations on place and time. Simultaneously a part of the surrounding landscape and distinct from it, each work bears an inherent, subtle tension—between being in and out of place. As well, each sculpture maintains a tenuous relationship to time. Constructed of such materials as leaves, icicles, sand, and flower petals, they are destined to change or inevitably vanish. Even those works made of more durable substances slowly transform as they weather with the passing seasons.

Goldsworthy frequently constructs stone arches—in different locations, with different materials, and at different times. Describing the arch’s intrinsic appeal, he writes: “I experience the vigour and force of stone in the arches that I make, one side clasping the other . . . so that neither gives way.” He likes quoting the British author D. H. Lawrence’s description of the arches in Lincoln Cathedral: “Here the stone leapt up from the plain earth, leapt up in a manifold, clustered desire each time, up, away from the horizontal earth.” Clearly, for Goldsworthy the arch is a dynamic form, rich with metaphorical possibilities.

For *Wichita Arch*, the artist specified Kansas limestone and explained his interest in using this material in this particular place:

> I love the idea of an arch of [lime]stone here because the stone is so hidden, there is no sense of it being here. But not only is it there, it used to be the sea. . . . So we are the furthest away from the sea you can possibly get in America, and there’s the presence of the sea.

Although it is not native to Kansas, the elm tree Goldsworthy planted beneath the arch has connections to place as well: at the site in Cottonwood Falls, Kansas, where limestone for the arch was quarried, a lone elm captured his attention. Coincidentally, elms were the first trees planted on the university campus, in 1896. When first installed, the arch seemed to shield the young plant. But over time, the elm’s branches are spreading out, up, and around the arch, so the two elements of the sculpture become entwined. Like all of Goldsworthy’s works, they celebrate the elemental beauty of the natural world and the inexorable passage of time.

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2. Ibid., quoting Lawrence’s novel *The Rainbow* (1915).

Emily Stamey

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**49 Wichita Arch**

2004
Kansa limestone and Australian elm
140 x 270 x 50 in.
Museum Commission, 2004.0014
Art of Our Time

Selections from the Ulrich Museum of Art
Wichita State University

Patricia McDonnell and Emily Stamey

With contributions by
Toby Kamps, Laura Moriarty,
Antonya Nelson, Timothy R. Rodgers,
and Robert Silberman

Photo-essay by Larry Schwarm

Ulrich Museum of Art | Wichita State University
in association with the University of Washington Press
This book is published in conjunction with the exhibition
Art of Our Time: Selections from the Ulrich Museum of Art,
Wichita State University
April 24–August 8, 2010.

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University of Washington Press
P.O. Box 50096
Seattle, WA 98195-1996
www.washington.edu/uwpress

Book design: Patrick Dooley, Lawrence, Kansas
Assistant manuscript editor: Susan C. Jones, Minneapolis
Photographers: Larry Schwarm and Jim Meyer for the Ulrich
Museum of Art, except work by Zhang Huan (courtesy of the
artist)
Printing and binding: Greystone Graphics, Kansas City, Kansas

This book was typeset in Adobe Garamond Pro, designed by
Robert Slimbach (based on the roman typefaces of Claude
Garamond and italic typefaces of Robert Granjon), and Gill Sans,
designed by Eric Gill.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Edwin A. Ulrich Museum of Art.
Art of our time: selections from the Ulrich Museum of Art,
Wichita State University / Patricia McDonnell and Emily Stamey;
with Toby Kamps . . . [et al.]; photographic essay by Larry
Schwarm. – 1st ed.
 p. cm.
Published on the occasion of an exhibition held at the Ulrich
Museum of Art, Wichita State University, Apr. 24–Aug. 8, 2010.
4. Edwin A. Ulrich Museum of Art – Exhibitions. I. McDonnell,
Patricia, 1956 – II. Stamey, Emily. III. Kamps, Toby IV. Schwarm,
Larry, 1944– V. Title. VI. Title: Selections from the Ulrich
Museum of Art, Wichita State University.
N6490.E36 2010
709.04'007478186 – dc22
2009051477

Front cover: Joan Miró, Personnages Oiseaux (Bird People), 1977–78
(cat. no. 16)
Back cover: Tom Ottersen, Millipede, 2008 (cat. no. 45)

This exhibition and book have been made possible through the
generous support of Emprise Bank and the National Endowment
for the Arts. Additional sponsors include the Joan S. Beren
Foundation, Edward and Helen Healy, Harry Pollak, and
Richard S. Smith and Sondra M. Langel. Support has also been
provided by Jon and Kelly Callen, Mike and Dee Michaelis, Jayne
S. Milburn, Christine F. Paulsen-Polk, and the Wichita State
University Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic
Affairs and Research.

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