Ames, IA – Iowa State University has received a gift of sculptures and drawings by important American artist Manuel Neri (American, b. 1930) from the Manuel Neri Trust of Benicia, California. Neri is recognized internationally by his sculptural work in marble, plaster and bronze that depicts the human figure and references both classical sculpture and contemporary forms popularized in his mid-century artistic development. The gift of art, valued at $1,275,500, supports the university’s $1.1 billion comprehensive fundraising campaign, Forever True, For Iowa State.

“This substantial gift of art by the Manuel Neri Trust will further educational studies, engagement and exploration of Neri’s role in advancing the human figurative tradition in art,” said Lynette Pohlman, director and chief curator, University Museums.

Manuel Neri is currently represented in the public Art on Campus Collection at Iowa State with a bronze relief sculpture in Morrill Hall, Mujer Pegada Series No. 1 (2006), and a marble sculpture, Escalieta I (1998), in the Gerdin Business Building. This recent gift of 15 sculptures and 14 drawings by Neri enhances the existing strong figurative art collection that includes Iowa State’s own artist-in-residence Christian Petersen (American, 1885-1961), as well as other internationally important artists, from Auguste Rodin (French, 1840-1917) to Stephen DeStaebler (American, 1933-2011).

This recent gift includes works of art by Neri spanning much of his artistic career from 1958 to the mid-1990s.
Manuel Neri was born in Sanger, California, in 1930, the son of Mexican immigrants. He attended San Francisco City College with the idea of becoming an electrical engineer, but turned to art after taking a class in ceramics. He then attended the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, and completed subsequent studies at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute), where he studied with artists who included Elmer Bischoff and Richard Diebenkorn. Neri was part of a group of artists considered the second generation of the Bay Area Figurative Movement of the 1960s in San Francisco.

Other recent acquisitions of works by Bay Area artists include bodies of artwork by Frank Lobdell, Mark Adams and Beth Van Hoesen.

Neri’s sculpture, drawings, and artists' books were featured in a 2005 exhibition at the Brunnier Art Museum. Along with the Iowa State public art collection, Neri’s work has been acquired for many important collections and prestigious museums, including the Anderson Collection at Stanford University; Art Institute of Chicago; Denver Art Museum; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Portland Art Museum, Oregon; Seattle Art Museum, and Yale University Art Gallery, among others.

In 2006, Manuel Neri was the recipient of the International Sculpture Center's Lifetime Achievement Award in Contemporary Sculpture. The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes individual sculptors who have made exemplary contributions to the field of sculpture. Only 33 sculptors have attained this prestigious recognition, three of which are represented in Iowa State’s public art collection: William King, Beverly Pepper, and Manuel Neri. Other honors include a National Art Foundation Award (1965); Guggenheim Fellowship (1979); NEA Individual Artist Grant (1980); Honorary Doctorates from the San Francisco Art Institute (1990), California College of Arts & Crafts (1992), and the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, DC (1995); and awards from the American Academy and Institute of Arts & Letters (1982), Orange County Museum of Art (1999); and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2008).

An exhibition of this latest gift of art, along with other loaned objects and figurative sculpture by Neri, is planned for the Christian Petersen Art Museum beginning January 2018, preceded by a partner exhibition opening this June at the Clarinda Carnegie Art Museum, Clarinda, Iowa.
The Iowa State University Foundation is a private, nonprofit organization committed to securing and managing gifts that benefit Iowa State University. The Forever True, For Iowa State campaign, with a historic goal to raise $1.1 billion, will help support Iowa State in becoming the premier land-grant university for the 21st century and beyond.

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Additional images available upon request.