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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SCULPTOR RUNE OLSEN PRESENTS “A NEW NATURAL HISTORY” AT THE MUSEUM OF SEX: OLSEN’S  
LIFE-SIZED INSTALLATION CAPTURES THE RAW ENERGY OF *THE SEX LIVES OF ANIMALS***

New York, NY - - June 16, 2008 – A male bonobo shrewdly soliciting sex in exchange for sugar cane.

Two female bonobos blissfully engaged in genital-to-genital rubbing. A male and a female white-tailed deer in the middle of having sex only to have a second male eagerly join them for a threesome. The strenuous coupling of endangered Panda bears. This summer, visitors to the Museum of Sex will encounter these creatures and others so vivid in their portrayal that they will likely feel as though they have unwittingly begun a voyeuristic journey into the wild.

For Norwegian, Brooklyn-based sculptor Rune Olsen, the upcoming debut of five life-sized animal sculptures at the Museum of Sex was nothing short of fate. In the years since graduating London’s prestigious Goldsmith College, Olsen has dedicated himself to what he describes as the art of “making life-sized sculptures of figures and animals that are obsessively taped and aggressively marked.”

This gritty depiction of humans and animals at their most raw developed into Olsen’s specialty. His unique medium and intense perspective had already earned critical success and become his signature in the art world when he received a call from the curatorial department at the Museum of Sex.

As it turned out, they were in need of a sculptor that could fill the literally tall order of creating life-sized animals without the use of taxidermy. The animals would need to be in graphic sexual poses and scenarios as a means to represent the content of *The Sex Lives of Animals*, their newest exhibition set to open on July 24, 2008.

"When MoSex first contacted me for this exhibition I was thrilled that I would be collaborating with pioneering scholars and experts that I have been reading continuously," said Olsen. "I was excited to contextualize my sculptures and conceptual concerns in this exhibition, and for a large audience to further understand the biological diversity of sex."

*The Sex Lives of Animals* is unlike any other exhibition the Museum of Sex has ever done. It is the Museum's first foray into both natural history and the sexuality of animals, not humans, as have been examined in the Museum's past thirteen exhibitions. At the core of this exhibition is the revelation that animals participate in a staggering array of behaviors where every conceivable physical and sexual partnership exists. Animals have been documented participating in foreplay behaviors such as kissing, hugging, mutual and self-stimulation, oral sex and every kind penetrative intercourse imaginable. Pleasure, it seems, is not restricted to the human realm.

Olsen's sculptures present what the Museum is referring to as "the new natural history" acting as a theoretical mirror to the Museum's objectives for this groundbreaking exhibition. His medium of choice is what he refers to as "social materials" - supplies readily available such as newspaper and tape. He then covers the surface of the finished sculpture with expressive hand-drawings. The end result of this process brings these animals to life for visitors so they can gain more insight into the complexities, stark differences and related nuances between animal and human sexuality.

"What I refer to as the 'social materials' that comprise my preferred medium of tape, newspaper and pencils, I am referring to familiar materials that anybody can easily obtain and use with minimal production costs," explained Olsen. "I read the newspaper every day and even though the newspaper isn't always visible in the sculpture, it is a recorder of human existence. Likewise, I find the immediacy of tape to be very attractive and like the pencil, we all know how to use it."

*Sculpture Magazine* referred to Olsen's previous work as "startlingly life-like" and Olsen's contributions to *The Sex Lives of Animals* bear no exception to that assessment. Intentionally featuring glass human eyes, some of which also happen to be the same striking blue color of the artist's own, the explicit pieces capture moments in time not shown in traditional nature documentaries or typically discussed in science classrooms.

"The only non-social materials I usually use are the glass eyes that are hand-painted to look like my eyes. This is where socialism and narcissism come together in what I feel is an alluring combination. In the sculptures for MoSex I have opted to include diversity in the form of brown and green eyes as well as blue for people to recognize themselves in these animals," remarked Olsen. "We respond to human eye contact - a concept widely manipulated in advertising. I want the sculptures to capture attention rather than be looked at as something different. Various animal eyes might be construed as alien in a sense, causing separation between animals and humans, between the sculptures and the viewer and perhaps leading to the reaction that the animals look freakish. The use of human eyes in the animals is a political statement that we are all animals."



The provocative installation Olsen has custom made for *The Sex Lives of Animals* is not his first presentation of dramatic and tense situations that take place in the wild every day. For his first solo show he examined the darker side of nature by crafting pieces of animals fighting and mating, taking on stances of dominance and cowering postures of compliance. These captivating sculptures included two bull elephants forcefully tangling their trunks and a black bear violently showing off his tongue and teeth. Olsen took this opportunity to also delve into lesser-known scenarios of animal confrontation by sculpting a rabbit forcefully mounting a rooster and a stag licking his partner's bloodied antler.

"I think interaction is vital. Physical experiences can hit below the belt, arouse our urges and hijack our minds. I enjoy this ride and I think my work reflects this," noted Olsen. "In my sculptures I also explore the complex and heated discussion on nature versus nurture. It is an ongoing debate in biology, anthropology and religion whether human development is primarily a result of 'nature' or 'nurture'— that is, genes or experience. I am intrigued by how nature governs many of our actions through instincts. I want to evoke strong instinctive emotions. What makes us behave in a

certain way? How do we make decisions? How do instincts affect these decisions and how do these instincts relate to the instincts of other animals?”

Olsen has exhibited in numerous galleries and museums throughout the U.S. and Europe. He is a member of **Sculptors Guild** in USA and several arts organizations in Norway, where he was a founding member of **Atelier G9**, a gallery with studios in Oslo. Olsen has won 11 awards from the Norwegian government, including the “*Emerging grant*” in 1997, the “*Establishing grant*” in 1999 and from 2003-2006, a distinguished “*Three-year work grant for young and emerging artists.*” In 2005, he was awarded the **New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship** and a 6 months studio residency with **Artist Alliance** in New York. In 2006 Olsen was awarded a place at the renowned **Art Omi International Artists Residency**. Olsen had a solo show in 2007 with **Samson Projects** that was reviewed by numerous and prestigious art magazines. In 2008 he will be participating in the *Norwegian Drawing Biennial* at **Kunstnernes Hus** and In-Site, an exhibition on the reopened Governors Island in New York.

“Rune Olsen had been engaged with the subject of animal sexuality in his work for some time, and we feel honored to be providing an institutional platform and context for these phenomenal pieces,” said Sarah Jacobs, Museum of Sex curator. “This exhibition is an exciting cross-discipline endeavor and by incorporating science and fine art, the Museum of Sex is producing an exhibition that is both revolutionary in its subject, and exciting in its display. With the addition of Rune’s work, we are giving science a contemporary facelift, moving beyond traditional taxidermy animals and dusty dioramas.”

Olsen is available for interview. Members of the media are invited to attend a press preview of *The Sex Lives of Animals* on Thursday, July 24, 2008 from 9- 11 am, at which Olsen will also be available for interview in addition to Sarah Jacobs.

#### ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF SEX

When the Museum of Sex first emerged on New York City’s Fifth Avenue in October of 2002, it was without precedent in the museum world. In the past five years, the Museum of Sex has featured thirteen exhibitions and five virtual

installations, each in keeping with the Museum's mission of advocating open discourse surrounding sex and sexuality, as well as striving to present to the public the best in current scholarship unhindered by self-censorship.

With each new exhibition, lecture series and event, the Museum of Sex is committed to addressing a wide range of topics, while simultaneously highlighting material and artifacts from different continents, cultures, time periods and mediums. In five short years, the permanent collection has grown to over 15,000 objects including artifacts, historical ephemera, media and a growing fine art collection.

The Museum is located at 233 Fifth Avenue at 27<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10016. Open 7 days a week: Sunday-Friday 11am-6:30 pm; Saturday 11am-8pm. Admission is \$14.50; \$13.50 seniors/students. Tickets may be purchased at the door or online at [www.museumofsex.com](http://www.museumofsex.com).

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