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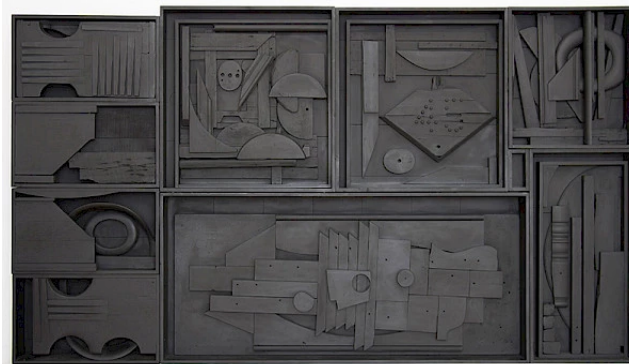
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[Press Kit and Images](#)

Architects of Being: Louise Nevelson and Esphyr Slobodkina Opens at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts on October 3, 2025

The Exhibition Marks the Museum's Most Significant Curatorial Project to Date by Introducing New Research on Two Midcentury American Artists



September 23, 2025 (LITTLE ROCK, Ark.) — The Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts (AMFA) is proud to present [*Architects of Being: Louise Nevelson and Esphyr Slobodkina*](#), a groundbreaking new exhibition showcasing works by two pioneering female artists on view in the Harriet and Warren Stephens Galleries from October 3, 2025, to January 11, 2026. AMFA members enjoy a first look at the exhibition on October 2, while free programs offered throughout the run of the exhibition are open to the public. As with all AMFA exhibitions, admission is free.

With the opening of this landmark exhibition, AMFA becomes the first art museum to present works by Nevelson and Slobodkina in direct dialogue. This pairing sheds new light on a significant period in art history when America was hesitant to embrace the rise of abstract art.

The exhibition's title celebrates the architectural spirits of Louise Nevelson and Esphyr Slobodkina, both Eastern European Jewish immigrants working in midcentury New York. As they constructed their identities within a male-dominated American art world, Nevelson and Slobodkina developed distinctly personal visual languages. While Nevelson is known primarily as a sculptor and Slobodkina as a painter, both explored cubism, surrealism, and constructivism, with assemblage as an important unifying theme throughout their careers.

AMFA's exhibition presents Nevelson's monumental sculptures like *Tide Garden IV*, a signature artwork in the AMFA Foundation Collection built from architectural fragments and found materials and gifted to the museum in 1983, alongside Esphyr Slobodkina's abstract paintings like *Levigator Abstraction* and mixed media works featuring everything from office supplies to dressmaking materials. This unprecedented pairing demonstrates how both artists transformed their artistic visions into powerful statements of identity.

"These two formidable women led parallel lives, and while they individually challenged conventions in both art and life, they had an uncanny way of arriving at similar creative outcomes," shares Dr. Catherine Walworth, the Jackye and Curtis Finch Jr. Curator of Drawings at AMFA. "With its playfully unexpected media, this exhibition shows that Nevelson and Slobodkina's art definitely belongs in conversation."

Architects of Being is the result of more than five years of development, bringing together sculptures, paintings, collages, jewelry, and rarely seen personal artifacts. The exhibition features significant loans from major institutions, galleries, and private collections nationwide, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Dr. Walworth is the visionary behind this exhibition, and also served as editor for an accompanying catalog featuring new research and original scholarship on each artist. Working closely with both the Louise Nevelson Foundation and the Slobodkina Foundation, Dr. Walworth combed through the artists' wardrobes and selected items like Slobodkina's *Striped Evening Muumuu* and Nevelson's *English Hunt Cap* for inclusion in the exhibition. Together with sculptures like Nevelson's *Dream House XXIII* and paintings such as Slobodkina's *Abstraction with Red Circle*, these personal effects make up the 77 unique objects on view. AMFA's presentation of *Architects of Being* marks a significant benchmark in Nevelson's exhibition history, as it is the first time Nevelson's clothing will be shown alongside her artwork.

"After years of researching these two artists, having the opportunity to place Nevelson's *Tide Garden IV* into an exhibition with a fuller context of her life and legacy is quite revelatory," explains Dr. Walworth. "*Architects of Being* is a perfect complement to the museum's growing collection of midcentury American art by women and gives us a unique viewpoint to tell these kinds of stories."

The founder and director of the Louise Nevelson Foundation, Maria Nevelson, and the president of the Slobodkina Foundation, Ann Marie Mulhearn Sayer, are joining Dr. Walworth for a once-in-a-lifetime, illuminating conversation about the exhibition to be held in the museum's Performing Arts Theater on October 4, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. Dr. Walworth is also set to give a lecture on Nevelson and Slobodkina's bodies of work in AMFA's Amerine/Calhoun Glass Box on October 29, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

The exhibition's catalog, entitled *Architects of Being: The Creative Lives of Louise Nevelson and Esphyr Slobodkina*, is published by the University of Arkansas Press and available for purchase in the AMFA Museum Store. Contributors include Dr. Walworth; Adrienne Montare, licensed architect and Fellow of the American Institute of Architects; Dr. Chelsea Pierce, McKinnon Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Chrysler Museum of Art; and Lisa Hayes Williams, Curator and Head of Exhibitions at the New Britain Museum of American Art.

"Art history is not a stagnant field – new ideas and understandings prompt constant revision and reconsideration of even the most well-studied artists and artistic movements," states Dr. Victoria Ramirez, AMFA's Executive Director. "AMFA is proud to share this innovative exhibition with audiences in Arkansas and beyond as we weave Nevelson and Slobodkina more firmly into the fabric of today's academic discourse."

Following its debut at AMFA, the exhibition will travel to the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia, and the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut in 2026.

Admission to AMFA is always free. For more information about AMFA and *Architects of Being: Louise Nevelson and Esphyr Slobodkina*, please visit arkmfa.org.

AMFA Member Events

Member Preview Night

Thursday, October 2, 2025
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Free admission for AMFA members, Circle Society, and corporate partners – tickets available at events.arkmfa.org.

AMFA members, Circle Society, and corporate partners enjoy the first look at *Architects of Being* during an exclusive reception with drinks, light bites, and live music.

Toast and Tour for Circle Society and Corporate Partners

Friday, October 3, 2025
5:00 p.m. cocktails, 6:00 p.m. tour

Free admission for Circle Society and corporate partners – tickets available at events.arkmfa.org.

Celebrate the exhibition's opening with a private tour and discussion led by Dr. Catherine Walworth, AMFA's Jackye and Curtis Finch Jr. Curator of Drawings.

Public Programs

Monumental: *Architects of Being* Art Talk

Saturday, October 4, 2025
10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Free admission – tickets available at events.arkmfa.org.

Join Founder and Director of the Louise Nevelson Foundation, Maria Nevelson; President of the Slobodkina Foundation, Ann Marie Mulhearn Sayer; and Dr. Catherine Walworth, the Jackye and Curtis Finch Jr. Curator of Drawings at AMFA, for a unique talk exploring how self-definition, structure, and material shaped the lives and legacies of these groundbreaking artists.

Exhibition Tours

Saturday, October 4, 12:00 p.m.
Saturday, October 18, 10:30 a.m.
Saturday, December 13, 10:30 a.m.

Free admission – tickets available at events.arkmfa.org.

Enjoy a guided look at several carefully selected works on view, gain a richer connection to the exhibition, and leave with a new understanding of Nevelson and Slobodkina's creative lives.

Family Fest: *Architects of Being*

Saturday, October 18, 2025
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Free admission – no registration required.

Step into the creative intersection of fashion and assemblage at this family-friendly event featuring art-making activities where you can build shadow-box sculptures, design wearable art, and sketch original fashion concepts.

Constructing Identity: *Architects of Being* Art Talk

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Free admission – tickets available at events.arkmfa.org.

Join Dr. Catherine Walworth, Jackye and Curtis Finch, Jr., Curator of Drawings, as she explores how these groundbreaking artists challenged conventions of art, design, and identity in mid-century New York.

Cocktails with the Curator: A Toast to *Architects of Being*

Wednesday, January 7, 2026

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Free admission – drinks and snacks available for purchase. Tickets available at events.arkmfa.org.

Raise a glass with Dr. Catherine Walworth, the Jackye and Curtis Finch Jr. Curator of Drawings, for an engaging dialogue and a deeper look at the exhibition before it begins its national tour.

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The catalogue for *Architects of Being: Louise Nevelson and Esphyr Slobodkina* is supported in part by the Wyeth Foundation for American Art.

This exhibition is organized by the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts.

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ARTWORK CREDIT LINE: Louise Nevelson (Pereiaslav, Ukraine (formerly Russian Empire), 1899 - 1988, New York, New York), *Tide Garden IV*, 1964, painted and assembled wood construction, 91 x 140 x 10 in., Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts Foundation Collection: Gift of Sidney Singer, Sr., Stephens Inc., Gerald Cramer, Martin Oppenheimer, Edward Rosenthal, and John Rosenthal. 1983.030.

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About the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts

Founded in 1937, the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts is the largest cultural institution of its kind in the state, offering a unique blend of visual and performing arts experiences. AMFA is committed to featuring diverse media and artistic perspectives within its permanent collection as well as through rotating temporary exhibitions. AMFA's international collection spans eight centuries, with strengths in works on paper and contemporary craft, and includes notable holdings by artists from Arkansas, the South, and across the United States and Europe.

With a vibrant mix of ideas, cultures, people, and places, AMFA extends this commitment to diversity through the innovative Windgate Art School, a dynamic children's theatre and performing arts program, and community-focused educational programs for all ages. Located in Little Rock's oldest urban green space, MacArthur Park, AMFA's landmark building and grounds are designed by Studio Gang and SCAPE, in collaboration with Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects.