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**C.M. Russell Museum announces its largest fundraising effort with
\$2.5 million gift from Ian and Nancy Davidson**

The *Art & Soul* \$25 million campaign elevates the Great Falls museum as a national treasure.

July 18, 2020, Great Falls, Montana — The C.M. Russell Museum in Great Falls announces today its largest fundraising initiative to date securing its future as a premier museum of Western art. The historic *Art & Soul Campaign* has quietly raised more than \$17.2 million towards its \$25 million campaign goal to preserve the legacy of the museum’s namesake Charles Marion Russell (1864 – 1926) — the world-renowned “cowboy artist.” The strategic growth campaign elevates the institution’s mission to engage current and future generations in Western art and culture and fortifies its financial future.

To ensure the museum’s financial stability in perpetuity, the campaign includes major growth of endowment funds including a \$2.5 million gift from Ian and Nancy Davidson of Great Falls — the largest cash gift in the museum’s history.

“The C.M. Russell Museum is a very important part of Great Falls and a treasure for the entire country,” said Ian Davidson. “When you are born and raised here, you realize how lucky you are to be surrounded by Russell’s art and the American West he captured.”

“We love Charlie Russell, his honesty and authenticity as an artist and as a person. It is a real joy for us to help build the museum’s endowment to enshrine his legacy for our community, for Montana, and for people around the world,” added Nancy Davidson.

The museum’s goal is to reach a \$20 million endowment that will ease the museum’s reliance on operating revenue from its annual art auction, *The Russell*, which can be affected by fluctuating art markets, economic impacts, and, most recently, a global pandemic.

The *Art & Soul Campaign* steering committee made up of museum supporters from the local community and across the country has been quietly fundraising since late 2017.

“We have been blown away by the generosity of donors, who are passionate about preserving the legacy of Charlie Russell, committed to making sure the museum has a lasting home in Great Falls, and invested in growing this institution as one of the finest Western art museums in North America,” said campaign co-chair Gene Thayer. “We look forward to celebrating many other gifts as we roll out the campaign.”

The campaign not only secures annual operating funds, but expands the museum’s permanent collection, funds new exhibitions and education programs, and lays the groundwork for building and gallery improvements as well as expansion of the museum complex.

The C.M. Russell Museum Complex is located on the grounds of the artist’s original home and log cabin studio. Russell lived in Montana from the time he was 16 and was known as a consummate Westerner, historian, advocate of the Northern Plains Indians, cowboy, writer, outdoorsman, conservationist, and not least, artist. In his vast body of work, including oils, watercolors, drawings, and sculptures as well as personal letters, he captured the changing West at the turn of the last century. His work has long been lauded for its authenticity, commentary on the time, and humor. His wife Nancy is credited for her business prowess in elevating Russell to international acclaim.

“Through the generosity of our donors, we are securing the legacy of Russell and the Western values he embodied,” said Tom Figarelle, C.M. Russell Museum executive director. “This is an unprecedented opportunity to grow our museum in size and stature and add amazing works of art to our permanent collection, including Russell’s infamous “The Hold Up.”

“The Hold Up,” the jewel of the Great Falls Mint Collection, is currently owned by Russell collector Tom Petrie of Denver, who is announcing a match challenge in the coming weeks to gift the Russell painting to the C.M. Russell Museum.

To reach its \$25 million goal by December 2022, the museum is accepting cash gifts, art acquisitions, planned giving, and bequests. Supporters can visit artandsoulmt.org to learn more about Russell’s legacy, the campaign, and giving areas.

About the C.M. Russell Museum

The C.M. Russell Museum is the first museum of Western art in the United States and traces its origins to 1930, when the log cabin studio of artist Charles Marion Russell (1864 – 1926) opened as the Russell Memorial in Great Falls, Mont. The C.M. Russell Museum Complex has grown substantially over the decades, with the mission to collect, preserve, research, interpret, and educate on the art and life of Charles M. Russell; the art and lives of his contemporaries; and the art of preceding and ensuing generations that depicts and focuses on the culture, life, and country of Russell’s West. The museum complex includes a vast collection of art, artifacts, and archival materials associated with Russell and other significant Western artists and the fully restored Russell home and studio, a National Historic Landmark. cmrussell.org

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