

HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

W I L D L I F E *and* L I V I N G H I S T O R Y

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MUSEUM SEEKS BLANKETS WITH STORIES BEHIND THEM

Community blankets will form work of art

Bend, OR – The High Desert Museum is collecting donated blankets with personal stories behind them to be used in a new exhibition opening next spring. Portland-based artist



Marie Watt will shape some 300 blankets into a sculpture called *Blanket Stories*, a tower that carries the poignant stories of the blankets' owners. The stories behind the blankets could be as dramatic as a blanket that traveled across the Oregon Trail or as common as one that kept a newborn warm as it was brought home from the hospital. Combined, they tell the story of the community.

Watt's sculpture, along with works by Portland Glass Artist David Willis and Allan McCollum, a New York artist, will be included in the Museum's exhibition, *Art for a Nation: Inspiration*

from the Great Depression, which opens April 16, 2016. The exhibit focuses on the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a U.S. government program which employed millions of Americans including artists, musicians and writers during the Great Depression. In the spirit of the WPA, the High Desert Museum commissioned these artists to create original works that will be a part of the exhibition.

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Watt's artwork reflects the significant role blankets play in our lives, in Native American culture and in the settling of the West. Her blanket towers have been exhibited by the Smithsonian, Tacoma Art Museum and Seattle Art Museum, to name a few. Anyone is welcome to donate a blanket, but those made from natural fibers are preferred. The blankets will become a permanent part of the sculpture and will not be returned. "If a blanket is too treasured to part with, a 'stand-in' may be submitted rather than the original," said Curator of Exhibitions & Collections Faith Powell.

Blankets may be dropped off at the Museum's Admissions desk through January 31. Donors are asked to write the blanket's story on a provided tag. In exchange for the blanket, donors will receive a special print by Marie Watt. The artist also will lead a public sewing circle at the Museum on January 16. Materials will be provided and no previous experience is necessary.

Through partnerships with other organizations in Central Oregon including the Central Oregon Symphony, Tower Theatre and Deschutes Public Library, there will be complementary events and programs in connection to the exhibition, including a film screening, live music, fashion show, lectures and more.

The Museum has been awarded funding from the Oregon Cultural Trust, Oregon Arts Commission, Oregon Community Foundation, The Roundhouse Foundation and Bend Cultural Tourism Fund for this exhibit, which will run through September 5, 2016. For additional information, visit www.highdesertmuseum.org.

About the High Desert Museum: Through exhibits, wildlife and living history, the High Desert Museum creates learning experiences to help audiences discover their connection to the past, their role in the present and their responsibility to the future. The Museum is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that was founded in 1982.

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