

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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CONTACT: Damian Fagan, communications manager
541-382-4754 ext. 300, dfagan@highdesertmuseum.org

EXHIBIT WILL HIGHLIGHT PUBLIC ART FROM THE 1930s AND 1940s
Art for a Nation: Inspiration from the Great Depression to open April 16, 2016



Example of work by Marie Watt

Bend, OR – The High Desert Museum is curating an exhibit based on the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a U.S. government program which employed millions of unemployed people, including artists, musicians and writers, during the Great Depression. Most people think of iconic construction projects that were built by the WPA such as Hoover Dam, Timberline Lodge and LaGuardia Airport, but more than 100,000 works of art also were created. Some of the artists who were commissioned included future luminaries Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Mark Rothko.

The exhibition will highlight the history, people and impact of the WPA and will include relevant paintings and prints from the Portland Art Museum and an immersive scene from the Great Depression. “The exhibit will depict the contrast between the difficulty of the times and the beauty of the art that was created,” said High Desert Museum Curator of Exhibitions & Collections Faith Powell.

In addition to the historical exhibition, the Museum has, in the spirit of the WPA, commissioned three contemporary artists to create original works which will be placed in different areas of the Museum. “Commissioning pieces is a rare privilege for us and we’re very excited to be partnering with such talented, diverse artists,” said Dr. Dana Whitelaw, executive director of the Museum. Portland, Oregon artist Marie Watt creates soaring blanket towers that carry the poignant stories of the blankets’ previous owners. Portland-based glass artist David Willis’ work addresses the relationships between people and nature on personal and social levels. Allan McCollum, a New York artist, has spent more than 45 years exploring how objects achieve public and personal meaning in a world inundated by mass production. McCollum is partnering with Bend artist Delia Paine (Via Delia) to create his installation. “We’re looking forward to seeing how the artists interpret this important era in their pieces.”

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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 including a film screening, live music, lectures and more.

The Museum has been awarded funding from the Oregon Cultural Trust, Oregon Community Foundation, The Roundhouse Foundation and Bend Cultural Tourism Fund for this exhibit, which will run through August 14, 2016.

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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