

HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

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High Desert Museum to Host Exhibition Focusing on Native American Women

“By Her Hand” highlights Edward S. Curtis and female Plateau artists

BEND, OR — *By Her Hand: Native American Women, Their Art and the Photographs of Edward S. Curtis*, an in-depth exhibition of photographs spanning a 30-year period, opens at the High Desert Museum on Saturday, September 22.

By Her Hand celebrates Indigenous artistic traditions that have existed for centuries and continue to thrive within American Indian communities today. Marking the 150th anniversary of Edward S. Curtis's birth, the exhibition features Curtis's photographs of Native women from the Christopher G. Cardozo Collection. From the High Desert Museum's permanent collection, the exhibit includes historical and contemporary pieces by female Native artists, giving greater historical context to Curtis's work and showing the continuation of vibrant artistic practices by artists today.

The artwork of photographer Edward S. Curtis is striking, complex and controversial. At the beginning of the 20th century with funds provided by J.P. Morgan, Curtis undertook the enormous project of documenting Native people from over 80 Tribes to record Native American culture amid rapid societal changes. His significance lies not only in the sheer volume of his work, but also the historical and cultural information collected regarding the lives of Native Americans. Over the decades, his sepia-toned prints of Native people have shaped how many non-Native people think about American Indians and the American West — at times in controversial ways.

For instance, Curtis photographed Native people in ways that depicted them as separate from Euro-American culture. In his famous photo “In a Piegan Lodge” (Montana, 1911), long before the invention of Photoshop, Curtis manipulated the image to remove a modern clock so that it reflected his vision of Native American life.

“We are honored to host this complex, beautiful exhibit for our community,” said High Desert Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D. “Our curators have woven in meaningful pieces from our own permanent collection and commentary from Native artists as part of the Museum’s continued focus on exploring the history and culture of Native Tribes.”

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By Her Hand: Native American Women, Their Art and the Photographs of Edward S. Curtis shares the continuing artistic traditions in the Columbia Plateau, affirming the Plateau women artist's role as culture bearer. For hundreds of years, women in this region have practiced a variety of art forms including basketry, beadwork and leatherwork, and they continue to practice these artistic skills in both traditional and contemporary forms today. By showcasing works of art created by Native women alongside Curtis's photographs, including contemporary works of art, this exhibition highlights Indigenous artistic traditions that have existed for centuries and continue to thrive within Native communities. Native artists' ingenuity in adapting and continuing traditional art forms serves as a testament to the power of Native people's survival.

By Her Hand (highdesertmuseum.org/by-her-hand) will be on display through January 20, 2019. It's made possible by the Oregon Heritage Foundation with support from Cascade A&E and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation. This exhibition has been organized by the Christopher Cardozo Collection and is circulated through GuestCurator Traveling Exhibitions.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM:

THE HIGH DESERT MUSEUM opened in 1982 and brings regional wildlife, culture, art and natural resources together to promote an understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of North America's high desert country. The Museum uses indoor and outdoor exhibits, wildlife in natural habitats, and living history demonstrations to help people discover and appreciate the high desert environment. The Museum is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a Smithsonian Affiliate. highdesertmuseum.org

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