

HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

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High Desert Museum Presents *Desert Reflections*

New exhibit explores the power of water in the High Desert

BEND, OR — An original exhibit exploring the power of water in the High Desert opens at the High Desert Museum on Saturday, April 27. *Desert Reflections: Water Shapes the West* weaves together science, history, art and contemporary issues to explore the role of water in the region's past, present and future.

By connecting visitors to water and its management through the lens of three different basins in the region — the Mid-Columbia River Basin, Great Salt Lake Basin and Klamath Basin — the exhibit will illuminate how water has shaped the High Desert's natural, cultural and geological history and explore how it features prominently in contemporary issues such as resource consumption, Indigenous sovereignty and climate change.

"The exhibit will offer visitors a look at water in this region and the complexities inherent to its management. Our hope is that they leave with a deeper understanding and appreciation of water in the West and the challenges and opportunities associated with it," said Louise Shirley, the Museum's Donald M. Kerr curator of natural history. "Collaboration is necessary at every level for water resources to be managed effectively and to balance the needs of people and ecosystems."

In addition to the discussion of the complexities of water management, *Desert Reflections* will connect visitors to the significance of water through visual art, music and spoken word performances. The High Desert Museum commissioned artwork from four Pacific Northwest artists for the exhibition, which also involved a field trip into the desert with experts in order to spark discussion and inspiration for the pieces.

Much like water permeates and sculpts every corner of the landscape, the art of *Desert Reflections* will extend from the Spirit of the West Gallery throughout the Museum's interior and exterior spaces. Presentations from multiple artists will create an immersive experience, from visual art alongside the Museum's stream to large-scale art pieces inside the Museum.

Bend Creative Laureate and spoken word artist Jason Graham, known as MOsley WOTta, is creating a video installation inside the Museum and an outdoor display along the stream behind the Museum. Klamath Modoc visual artist Ka'ila Farrell-Smith, who looks at art as a means of activism, will present paintings created using traditional Indigenous art practices in response to the proposed oil pipeline through the Klamath Basin.

Harmonic Laboratory, a mixed-media art collective from Eugene, will weave together video, dance and choreography to explore the rhythms of water. And Dana Reason, composer and sonic arts teacher at

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Oregon State University, will create a site-specific, large-scale interactive sound and performance work that utilizes research data on water tables in Oregon.

“Water is a highly valuable and finite resource that permeates every aspect of our shared history,” said Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D. “*Desert Reflections* is a collaboration among not just our curators but many artists and experts throughout our region, uniting to share with visitors a dynamic, textured narrative on the many ways water touches all of our lives in the High Desert.”



Bonneville Salt Flats, by Bob Wick, BLM

To complement the exhibit, a variety of events and programs will offer exciting and deeper explorations of *Desert Reflections*. Programs include a Natural History Pub talk focused on water management in the High Desert, a lecture by ornithologist Noah Stryker, a Museum curator-led field trip to the Pelton Round Butte Dam, artist panel discussions and more. All of them will serve to spark dialogue about issues relating to water. For *Desert Reflections* programming, go to highdesertmuseum.org/calendar starting on Friday, February 8.

Desert Reflections: Water Shapes the West (highdesertmuseum.org/desert-reflections) opens Saturday, April 27 and will be on display through September 29.

Desert Reflections is made possible by Avion Water Co, Alex Hodge Construction, the Bend Cultural Tourism Fund, The Bend Foundation, FM News 100 & 1110 AM KBND, The Ford Family Foundation, KTVZ-KFXO, Oregon Community Foundation’s Creative Heights Initiative, the Oregon Cultural Trust and Visit Central Oregon, with support from Bend Magazine, Central Oregon Radiology Associates, the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Chubb, The Jackson Foundation and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation.

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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