



OREGON ARTS
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'Art of Ceremony' Exhibition at Hallie Ford Museum of Art Selected for Oregon American Masterpieces Grant

Project is Part of National Endowment for the Arts' Initiative

The Oregon Arts Commission has selected "The Art of Ceremony," planned by the Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University in Salem, as Oregon's 2008 American Masterpieces project. The Commission has awarded the project a \$50,000 grant using funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

"The Arts Commission reviewed many strong proposals in this second round of special American Masterpieces grant funding. "The Art of Ceremony" project was selected because of its potential to show work rarely seen by the public and to examine the concept of a "masterpiece," said Christine D'Arcy, Executive Director of the Commission. "We are very pleased to announce this award."

Organized by Willamette anthropology associate professor Rebecca Dobkins in collaboration with Native community curators, "The Art of Ceremony" will be a ground breaking exhibition of and book about historic and contemporary ceremonial regalia from Oregon tribes.

"Ceremonial regalia is perhaps the most highly regarded art form within American Indian groups and thus truly represents an indigenous definition of *master work*," Dobkins said.

"The Art of Ceremony' promises to contribute profoundly to the national conversation about what constitutes American art and American masterpieces. We are honored to be working in partnership with Oregon tribes on this project."

Museum staff will work closely with the Siletz, Umatilla, Warm Springs and other Oregon tribes in the development of the exhibit, which will open at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art in

Fall 2008 and then travel to the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute and the Museum at Warm Springs at no cost to those institutions. "We are extremely honored to have the exhibition selected as Oregon's 2008 American Masterpieces project, excited to be able to work with native communities on the exhibition's development and thrilled to be able to share the exhibition with audiences throughout the state," Museum Director John Olbrantz said.

The collaborative curatorial process will identify the complex aesthetic criteria by which regalia-makers judge their own and others' work, apply these criteria to the selection of work for the exhibition, and then articulate them within the exhibition itself. In this way, the public will come to understand the multiple meanings of "masterpiece," "beauty," "excellence," and "innovation," as expressed in native community standards.

Regalia from Oregon is exceptionally diverse, from the Plateau area's buckskin and beadwork, to the Columbia River region's use of condor feathers, to the coastal area's feather work and abalone shell decoration. "A lot of people attend intertribal events such as powwows and mistake what they see there as our traditional dances and regalia," said Bud Lane, vice chairman of Siletz Tribal Council. "Each tribe has its own regalia and dances that go way back. We want people to see that each tribe has its individual traditions and cultures that vary from region to region."

In all areas, regalia reflects environmental and cultural transformations and generates spiritual power and social status. The exhibition will include contemporary regalia from the Siletz, Umatilla and Warm Springs communities and borrow historic regalia from major American collections. "It's extremely rare for the public to see this traditional regalia," Lane said. "Outside of our dance houses, we don't do many public appearances."

A full array of public programming, including artist demonstrations and workshops, is envisioned. The accompanying book will be completed following the exhibit.

In addition to the NEA American Masterpieces grant, the project is supported by a Millicent McIntosh Fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation granted to Rebecca Dobkins for 2007-09.

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The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of the Economic Development Department in 1993, in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the Commission's expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development. The Arts Commission is supported with general funds appropriated by the Oregon legislature and with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust.

More information about the Oregon Arts Commission is available online at:
www.oregonartscommission.org