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Spring 2020 ■ Montana - The Land of Creativity

Providing information to all Montanans through funding by the National Endowment for the Arts and the State of Montana

MAC NEWS

Governor appoints two new members, four returnees to MAC

The Montana Arts Council welcomes two new board members – Angela Russell of Lodge Grass and Corby Skinner of Billings. Russell replaces Lynne Montague, who was appointed in 2015 and served one term, and Skinner fills the vacated term of Arlene Parisot, which ends in 2023.



Corby Skinner

“Lynne brought the perspectives of an artist, an active member of the cultural community, and a profession as an advocate for children and juveniles to the arts council,” says MAC Executive Director Tatiana Gant. “Lynne served on several MAC committees, including the monthly review of Strategic Investment Grant applications. She thought deeply about every comment she shared – I’ll miss working with her.”



Angela Russell

Gant also expressed the Council’s sadness over the loss of longtime council member Parisot, who died Nov. 23. “We will miss her warmth, brilliance and humor,” she wrote in the winter issue of *State of the Arts*. “She listened carefully, spoke honestly, and the council respected her insight.”

The two new members, Russell and Skinner, add a valuable perspective to the council.

“At recent meetings, the council has been looking at ways to address the inequity of access to cultural resources across Montana,” Gant says. “Having two new members from the eastern part of the state will help us understand the priorities of the residents in their communities.”

She notes, “Corby has been so deeply involved in the cultural community of Billings, and Angela has accomplished so much around both preservation and encouraging contemporary expression.”

Gov. Steve Bullock also reappointed four members: G.B. Carson, Sean Falcon Chandler, Mark Kuipers and Jean Steele will serve until 2025.

“This has been such an extraordinary group of leaders, and our new members will add so much,” says Gant.

Corby Skinner, an independent marketing professional in Billings, is regarded across Montana for his capacity to assess issues and create positive, effective messages. He’s worked in all aspects of performing, visual and literary arts.

As director of The Writer’s Voice since its beginning in 1991, Skinner has coordinated seven Big Read programs for the National Endowment for the Arts and 17 consecutive High Plains Book Festivals featuring authors from a seven-state region and three Canadian provinces.

See MAC Members on next page

Crow tell their own story with major exhibit at Chicago’s Field Museum

By Anna Paige
 Reprinted with permission from the *Billings Gazette*, billingsgazette.com, March 15

As an indigenous female scholar and curator, Nina Sanders doesn’t lack for stories to tell.

Born and raised on the Crow Indian Reservation, Sanders is working to decolonize museums and work within such institutions that have for centuries excluded and misrepresented Indigenous voices in exhibits and in history books.

“We can effectively look at cultural institutions with historical collections that are the cause of these misinterpretations of our culture and the perpetuation of stereotypes,” said Sanders, whose Apsáalooke name, Akbileoosh, means Brings the Water.

Last year, Sanders was invited to curate an exhibition for the Field Museum in Chicago. Titled “Apsáalooke Women and Warriors,” it is the largest exhibition pairing historical and contemporary items in the Crow tribe’s history and the first major exhibit curated by a Native American scholar, in collaboration with her community, in the museum’s 126-year history.

An exploited past

The history of Indigenous people has most often been retold by those outside the culture, which has homogenized Native Americans and placed them in historically inaccurate contexts while ignoring their lives in contemporary society.

“That is slowly beginning to change, as Native artists tell these stories in incredibly effective ways,” said



Curator Nina Sanders carries a money tree, a traditional gift to honor someone, in a parade to celebrate the opening of the Field Museum’s new exhibition “Apsáalooke Women and Warriors” in Chicago. (Photo by Anna Paige/Courtesy of Billings Gazette)

Sanders, who brought together more than 20 Indigenous collaborators, including writers, scholars, artists, photographers, filmmakers and designers, to showcase the powerful place that Apsáalooke women hold in historical and modern times.

Indigenous people have also long been exploited for their cultural identity and artifacts, while their traditions and imagery have been appropriated or represented without context or reverence.

See Crow Tell Their Story, page 5

Arts in the Age of COVID-19

MCT lays off 66 actors/directors, cancels tour

By Kristi Niemeyer

As the world knows by now, the COVID-19 virus is unfolding in ways that are both rapid and unprecedented, and the arts world is certainly not immune.

Missoula Children’s Theatre, an organization with roots grounded in Montana and branches that spread across the nation and around the world, was hit particularly hard.

The staff at the Missoula-based theatre met March 13 to assess the unfolding public health crisis, and decided to cancel the last five shows of “The Spitfire Grill,” a community theatre production, as well as an upcoming children’s day camp, “Beauty Lou and the Country Beast,” that had 66 kids enrolled.

“There were no cases in Montana when we went into the meeting, and by the time we got out, there were five,” says Terri Elander, MCT’s International and Public Relations director.

By Monday, March 16, schools were closing in Montana and nationwide. In the face of school closures, and strict guidelines coming from the state and federal level,



An MCT production of “Hansel and Gretel” – one of many touring shows now cancelled through May. (A2 Photography)

MCT cancelled 254 tour residencies through May 20 and was forced to lay off 66 actors.

“It’s pretty devastating for all of us right now,” says Elander. “But the tendency, the statistics and the wisdom we’re hearing is that it may get worse.”

The estimated economic hit to MCT is \$1.5 million in lost revenue, and much more if the summer tour to military bases around the world is cancelled.

In the immediate future, says Elander, “13,000 children won’t be able to be in a production that many look forward to for the entire year.”

Meanwhile MCT’s two-person teams of actors/directors, spread out across the United States, are trying to find their way home.

MCT veteran Brandon Price posted a note on Facebook’s Tour Actor/Director (TAD) alumni page Sunday morning, March 15: “How is MCT doing with all this? Any teams stuck out there? Anything we can do to lend a hand?”

See MCT Tour, page 6



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tatiana Gant, Executive Director
tatiana.gant@mt.gov



Photo by Czelsi Gomez

We are in this together

As world events become local, we thank our constituents for postponing and canceling events and making accommodations for staff and volunteers. MAC is committed to everything possible to be flexible and understanding with deadlines and grant funding. We will continue to monitor resources for the creative sector and share them across our social media feeds.

The National Endowment is also tuned in, as reflected in this message from NEA Chair Mary Anne Carter:

“As America confronts this period of unprecedented change and uncertainty, we want to assure you that one thing will **not** change: our support for the arts across this great nation.

“The National Endowment for the Arts is open for business. Our staff, while working remotely for the next several weeks, is available to you via phone or email, as usual ...

“We know that there are more than five million Americans who make their livelihoods in the broader arts and cultural sector across the country and are potentially at risk. We also know that the arts provide comfort, resilience, wisdom, and the means for self-expression and connection, perhaps even more so during challenging times such as these.

“As you focus on the health and safety of yourself and your loved ones, please know that we are in this together, and that you can continue to rely on our full support.”

Making Native Nations visible

Twice in the past six months, I’ve had the opportunity to hear presentations on the research and findings behind “Reclaiming Native Truth,” available at the website of the same name. In developing the report, researchers examined the understanding and perceptions of Native Americans by their fellow Americans. Among the findings:

- 40% of Americans don’t believe that Native Americans are a living culture
- 72% of Americans rarely receive information on Native Americans, past or present
- .04% of media includes Native characters

According to “Becoming Visible,” a companion publication to the research referenced, the public school education system is the most powerful tool for shaping public opinion. In their nation-wide assessment, researchers note the decades-long efforts of the National Indian Education Association to advocate for a curriculum that includes an accurate history and contemporary Native issues and accomplishments.

Despite these efforts, 87% of history standards don’t mention Natives after 1900.



A bright spot: the report recognizes Montana for allocating resources, having dedicated staff at the Office of Public Instruction, and working with Native Nations to implement Indian Education for All.

The nonprofit IllumiNative, formed to act on the findings of “Reclaiming Native Truths,” states that invisibility is the modern form of violence against Native Americans. The exhibit of “Apsáalooke Women and Warriors” has the potential to make substantial strides in advancing a truthful and accurate narrative.

Touted as the first major exhibit curated by a Native American scholar, it involves many Montana contemporary Apsáalooke

artists along with sacred items that have not been on display for more than 100 years. We are lucky that the *Billings Gazette* has provided abundant coverage of the exhibit, including sending journalist Anna Paige to cover the openings in Chicago.

If you find the article reprinted in this issue interesting, I encourage you to look at the *Gazette’s* other pieces.

It’s been wonderful to see my social media feeds flooded with images of the artists and the exhibits.

Montana Arts Council has been thinking deeply about ways that we can remove barriers to state resources and increase access to arts opportunities. As we move toward greater equity, I’m glad to have the *State of the Arts* newspaper to share what we find inspiring about Montana. Please don’t hesitate to let us know what more we can uncover.

Sign up for MAC’s eNews

Between the quarterly issues of the *State of the Arts*, our staff publishes four separate e-newsletters with opportunities and information:

- Artists’ eNews
- Arts Educators’ eNews
- Arts Organizations’ eNews
- Public Artists’ eNews

If you’d like to sign up for one or more of these, please offer us your contact information and what you’d like to receive at: art.mt.gov/enews or send us an email at: mac@mt.gov.

Keep an eye on your mailbox

MAC has been cleaning and updating our mailing list database. Thank you to the many who have updated their information electronically.

As a final step, a postcard will be sent to all addresses with which we have not had contact. Please return the reply card to continue to receive information.

You can always change your information by emailing mac@mt.gov or calling 406-444-6430.

MAC seeks program officer

The Montana Arts Council is seeking a program officer to join its staff in Helena. The position was posted on the state hiring website, mtstatejobs.taleo.net, March 11 and the first review of applicants is April 6. The position will remain posted until filled.

According to the job description:

The Montana Arts Council (MAC) is the agency of state government established to develop the creative potential of all Montanans, advance education, spur economic vibrancy and revitalize communities through involvement in the arts.

MAC is looking for a team-oriented, hard-working and fun-loving individual with an aptitude for learning new skills who will thrive in a small office environment.

MAC is a dynamic agency where all members work strategically to address issues of diversity, equity, access and inclusion.

The Program Officer will:

- Represent MAC across Montana and nationally
 - Promote grant programs like The Cultural Trust, Strategic Investment Grants and Artist’s Innovation Awards
 - Develop, refine and implement all aspects of grant programs
 - Contribute content for MAC’s social media channels
 - Provide assistance to artists, educators and non-profit organizations
- Knowledge of the arts is not necessary – a love of the arts and creativity is required!
- To apply for this position, submit a resume and cover letter through the State of Montana Careers site. The cover letter should describe how your knowledge and skills align with the duties of this position. Only electronic applications will be accepted.
- For more information, email JeniferAlger@mt.gov or call 406-444-6489.

MAC Members (from previous page)

He led the marketing and programming for the Alberta Bair Theater for 18 years and served as Arts and Humanities Field Coordinator for the National YMCA of the USA for eight years.

Skinner is currently on the boards of the Alberta Bair Theater, Art House Cinema and Billings Cultural Partners. He served as the chair of the Yellowstone Art Museum’s annual art auction in 2019 and 2020. Skinner is also cohost of the arts and culture radio program, “Resounds,” which airs on Yellowstone Public Radio.

In 2009, he was awarded the Montana Governor’s Humanities Award, and in 2015, he received the Philip M. Fortin Humanitarian Award.

Skinner received his BFA from the University of Montana and an MFA from Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, CA.

Angela Russell, a member of the Crow Tribe, has spent her life involved in health, social and political issues for the Crow Nation and the State of Montana. She served

four terms in the Montana House of Representatives, one term with the newly created Crow Tribal Legislature, and served as Chief Judge for the Crow Tribal Court.

Russell actively participated in the National Council of Native American Legislators and served as an officer of the Native American Court Judges Association.

She was a co-organizer of the Apsáalooke Committee for the Arts, which promotes and supports local artists and craftspersons, and published the Apsáalooke Calendar for 30 years, which featured early Crow photographs and history, poetry and artwork.

Public service has included serving as chair for the Friends of Chief Plenty Coups, trustee of the Big Horn County Library Association, and as a member of the Montana Board of Crime Control.

Russell received a bachelor’s degree and a juris doctorate from the University of Montana and a master’s degree from Tulane University.

The full council convenes June 5-7 in Whitefish.

Artist’s Innovation Award Exhibition on display at the Holter in May

The Montana Arts Council named six Montana artists in November to receive Artist’s Innovation Awards. Their works are on display in May in the Holter Museum’s High Gallery.

The \$5,000 award is given every two years to artists who have attained a level of success in their pursuit of discovery.

AIA recipients are:

Robert Harrison, Helena, with support from the Jessie Wilber and Frances Senska Individual Artist Award in Ceramics

Nan Parsons, Basin

Jennifer Reifsneider, Missoula

Naomi Siegel, Missoula

Melissa Stephenson, Missoula

Jane Waggoner Deschner, Billings

For more information, visit www.holtermuseum.org.

STATE OF THE ARTS

State of the Arts is published four times a year by the Montana Arts Council and produced by *Lively Times*.

State of the Arts welcomes submissions of photographs, press releases and newsworthy information from individual artists and arts organizations.

Please check with the Montana Arts Council for reprint permission.

Next Deadline: The deadline for submissions is June 5 for the Summer issue (July-September). Send items to: Montana Arts Council, PO Box 202201, Helena, MT 59620-2201; phone 406-444-6430, fax 406-444-6548 or email mac@mt.gov.

Subscriptions: *State of the Arts* is available free of charge upon request as a public service of the Montana Arts Council. To subscribe, call 406-444-6430, or update or sign-up online at art.mt.gov.

CONGRATS TO ...

Rising Voices at Browning High School, which was selected as a winner of the 2020 Library of Congress State Literacy Awards. The poetry club will receive \$2,000 in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the promotion of literacy and reading in their community and state. Rising Voices is a student-led writing group established in 2014 under the guidance of **Amy Andreas**, the school librarian. Approximately 100 teens have been active members of the club. Since its development, Rising Voices students have worked with writers from Montana and all across the country to help hone and inspire their writing. The group has inspired a new generation of writers from the Blackfeet Nation and has helped students find the power of sharing their strong and creative voices with others. Each year culminates with the Rising Voices Literacy Night when 50–100 students, staff, and community members listen to students share their work and celebrate their creative efforts. “This is very exciting,” Andreas said. “The students are, of course, exceedingly pleased to receive more state and national recognition for the group. They don’t understand how our ‘rag-tag’ group of writers has received so many accolades for just getting together, writing, and supporting each other’s creative efforts.” The award will be used to help publish student poetry each year, bring in some visiting poets and writers and help students experience some literacy activities in other areas of the state. The group was nominated by the Montana Center for the Book.



Rising Voices of Browning High School

Gallery 16 in downtown Great Falls, which is celebrating 50 years in business. Since the 1970s, the gallery has exhibited the work of Montana artists in many mediums, including painting, ceramics, textiles, prints, jewelry and woodworking. Gallery 16, named for the street where the first storefront sat, was launched by nine women who pooled their resources to keep the doors open. It was both a place to sell their work and create in the studio space. “They said it couldn’t be done,” says longtime gallery member and Great Falls ceramic artist Judy Ericksen. She reports that when the cooperative gallery was formed five decades ago “by those brave women, the comment was that no group of women could get along together well enough” to sustain a business. But by the gallery’s 16th birthday, there were 16 members celebrating at its former address on 16th St. “And now we’re 50!” says Ericksen. Since its inception there have been moves to other downtown locations, leading the gallery to its current home at 600 Central Ave., where nearly 100 artists – men and women – are represented.

The five recipients of Arts Missoula’s annual Arts & Culture Awards, which honor individuals and organizations whose outstanding work in the arts and humanities have made a significant contribution to the community’s quality of life. This year’s Cultural Ambassador Award, honoring someone who has consistently supported the arts community and cultural diplomacy, goes to **Nancy Matthews**, volunteer and board member for several arts organizations, who has helped bring international art exhibitions to Missoula. The Individual Artist, celebrating someone who has shown exceptional achievement in their chosen craft, goes to **Margaret Baldrige**, concertmaster for the Missoula Symphony Orchestra, violinist for the String Orchestra of the Rockies and the Sapphire Trio, and longtime UM Music professor. The Arts Educator, honoring an outstanding local educator who has devoted a career to teaching the arts, is awarded to **John Combs**, fine arts supervisor for Missoula County Public Schools, and former band director at Hellgate High School. The Business Support for the Arts, given to a business that has provided long-term support to Missoula’s artists and arts organizations, is awarded to **Blackfoot Communications**; and the Cultural Vision Award, honoring artistic programming, goes to the **Zootown Arts Community Center**, with its new facility located in downtown Missoula. The recipients “are prime examples of what makes Missoula an exceptional place to work and live,” said Arts Missoula Executive Director Tom Bensen. Due to COVID-19, the annual awards lunch has been postponed. For more information, visit www.artsmissoula.org.

The family of longtime Flathead Valley artist **Marvin Messing** (1922–2014), whose drawings, “The Art of the Cross,” are on display in St. James Episcopal Cathedral’s gallery in Chicago Feb. 26–April 12. The display is composed of his large, detailed charcoal drawings and depicts the classic devotional service commemorating 14 events in Christ’s journey typically referred to as The Passion of Christ, The Story of the Crucifixion or The Stations of the Cross. Messing portrayed three further views of the story, expanding his series to 17 drawings. Although the artist is known for his colorful surrealist paintings, he chose black and white with touches of burnt sienna for “The Art of the Cross,” hoping the scenes would evoke deeper emotions while capturing the gravity of the story. At the time Messing drew the pieces, he was actively involved in the inter-denominational Cursillo movement in Montana. The sketches were first viewed at a gathering in 1991 and subsequently were shown in many churches in the Flathead Valley. Messing’s daughters, **Kris Messing** of Stevensville and **Pam Messing Hughes** of Whitefish, have mounted the series so the works are protected and can be displayed more easily. Honoring their father’s wishes, they say the collection may be used by any denomination and all people should feel welcome to view the works.

Bozeman filmmaker **Paula Mozen**, whose film, “Life Interrupted: Telling Breast Cancer Stories,” has reaped awards at a number of notable festivals in 2019. The film was named Best Documentary Feature at the Long Beach Indie International Film Festival, took Best in Show at Docs Without Borders and the Women’s International Film Festival, and was an award finalist for the Polish International Film Festival, Changing Face International Film Festival and the Flathead Lake International Cinemafest (FLIC). The film by the Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and two-time breast cancer survivor shares intimate stories about women confronting a life-altering diagnosis who refuse to step down. Notable for its unflinching view of the often-scary process of diagnosis and treatment, the documentary also offers useful insights into the emotional and physical aspects of the disease. Featuring women from across the United States, “Life Interrupted” was produced in Bozeman and funded by many organizations including the Greater Montana Foundation and the Montana Film Commission.

More Congrats on next page

Helena potter **Sarah Jaeger**, who was named this year’s Potter Laureate by Montana Clay, a statewide organization of ceramic artists. Jaeger received a BA from Harvard College and a BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute. Her functional porcelain pottery is often thrown and altered, then glazed using wax resists, which creates layers of color. She has taught at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University, and Pomona College in California, and has given workshops at schools and art centers nationally. She also served on the board of directors for the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts for 10 years. Jaeger was the recipient of the 1996 Montana Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship and the 1991 Emerging Talent Award from the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts. In 2006, she was awarded a Target Fellowship from United States Artists; she was also among the artists profiled in the PBS documentary “Craft in America.” Her work is in public and private collections and, most importantly, kitchens around the country. “Sarah has been an active and productive member of the clay community in Montana for decades,” writes Alison Reintjes of Montana Clay. “In addition to being an amazing potter she has willingly shared her knowledge with others. In recent years she has shown resilience while dealing with health issues and, at the same time ... been developing a strong new body of work.”



Montana Potter Laureate Sarah Jaeger

Radius Gallery owners **Jason Neal and Lisa Simon**, on moving to their elegant new space at 120 N. Higgins Ave. (formerly the Uptown Diner), in Missoula. Refashioned and revitalized, Radius opened in January with an array of new works by the gallery’s stable of artists and a major exhibition of works by iconic artist Rudy Autio. In the new location, the couple plans to continue their mission of exhibiting “masterfully made, eye-catching and thought-provoking contemporary artworks by artists from across the region and beyond.” The two-story space, replete with soaring skylights, 16-foot-high ceilings and museum-caliber lighting, also features an upstairs gallery devoted to showcasing “Montana’s abiding role in the ever-expanding field of ceramic arts.” Another gallery space is dedicated to Montana’s rich artistic and cultural heritage. The building’s owners, **Karen and Brian Sippy**, have an ambitious vision to foster a thriving, sustainable arts economy in Missoula that cultivates artists and collectors alike. In addition to Radius, the site will include Art Vault, a business providing state-of-the-art storage for precious collectables; and a mural program on the south-facing wall of the building. Neal and Simon first opened Radius in 2014 at 114 E. Main St.; their new digs were designed by **Don MacArthur** of MMW Architects. Artist Julia Galloway told the *Missoulian*, “This gallery is a treasure to have in Missoula, and raises up contemporary art in Montana and the Northwest.”



Radius Gallery (Photo by William Marcus)



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Send us your good news

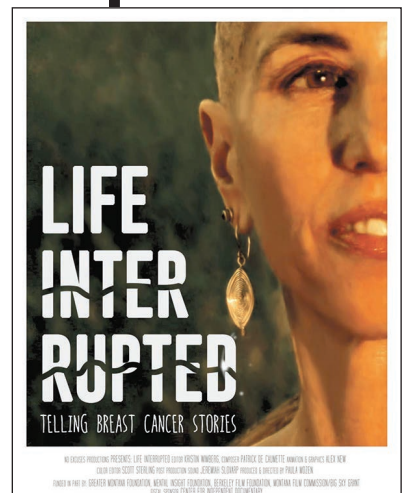
Artists, writers, musicians, arts educators and arts administrators: Please let us know about major awards and accomplishments, especially beyond the borders of Montana.

Send your good news to Congrats, c/o Kristi Niemeyer, 207 6th Ave. E, Polson, MT 59860; or better yet, email kristi@livelytimes.com.

If you include a digital photo, please make sure it’s at least 200 lines per inch (lpi or dpi) and a file size of over 500kb.



“The Art of the Cross” by Marvin Messing



Filmmaker Paula Mozen’s “Life Interrupted”



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Downtown Dance Collective seeks new home

The historic La Flesch building at 121 W. Main St. in downtown Missoula recently sold, leaving its tenant, the Downtown Dance Collective without a home as of June 11.

"I am heartbroken," writes DDC founder Heather Adams. "Thousands of people have shared their love, their energy and their time making the DDC all that it is today."

In the wake of COVID-19, the studio has suspended classes and performances, and Adams was exploring online platforms to deliver class content to dancers at home. "We need dance and movement now more than ever," she wrote.

At the same time Adams is looking for a new home for the DDC. To keep up with these transitions, visit ddcmontana.com.

More Congrats to ...

The **Alberta Bair Theater** in Billings which received a \$500,000 grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust to help fund the theater's \$13.6 million renovation and expansion. "We are thrilled to receive this level of support for, and commitment to, the capital campaign," said Jan Dietrich, executive director of the ABT. She noted that the grant brings the organization to within \$600,000 of achieving its \$13.6 million funding goal. "This recent gift helps insure a brick and mortar home for the performing arts in our region," says Dietrich. The ABT is on track to complete the renovation by September, and plans to celebrate opening night on Sept. 12 with a concert by Emmy and Tony Award-winning actress and singer Kristin Chenoweth.

The **Montana Folk Festival**, which received a \$200,000 challenge grant from The Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation in conjunction with Montana Resources to support this year's event, slated for July 10-12 in Butte. The festival will initially receive \$100,000, which must be matched by contributions from other Montana businesses. If organizers meet the challenge, the Washington Foundation kicks in another \$100,000. The festival, which began in 2008 as The National Folk Festival, and has continued since 2011 as the Montana Folk Festival, brings an estimated 150,000 visitors to Butte each summer. "We want to see this event continue for the long term, which is why we are doubling our support for this signature event," said Mike Halligan, executive director of the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation.

TRANSITIONS

Congratulations and best wishes to **Jennifer Asebrook**, an old hand at Whitefish Theatre Company who quietly assumed the mantle of executive director Jan. 1 after serving as development director since 2013. She takes over from **Gayle MacLaren**, executive director since 2014 and a member of the WTC staff since 1999, who remains with the company in a part-time capacity as operations manager. "I am so excited for this new opportunity," says Asebrook. "I have really enjoyed learning about the administrative aspects of this wonderful community theatre. The best part is that our incredible staff has remained intact with these changes and Gayle can continue to be my mentor and source of support." For MacLaren, the transition offers "the best of both worlds" – an opportunity to semi-retire, "but still spend time in a place that I love and with community that I love to see." Asebrook is a native of Milwaukee, who grew up in Amherst, MA. She earned a master's in plant ecology from Duke University and arrived in Montana in 1993 to complete her master's thesis at Glacier National Park. She met her husband-to-be that summer, returned in 1994 and stayed. "I can't imagine living anywhere else," she says. Even though her background is in science (she co-owns an environmental consulting company), she was raised by an arts-loving family and grew up attending musicals, plays, dance and live music. When she moved to Montana, she bought a season pass to the Whitefish Theatre Co. and became a regular patron. "I ultimately felt like I could be an excellent promoter/cheerleader of the organization," and the board and staff agreed, first hiring her for a part-time marketing position, then promoting her to development director, and now executive director. Asebrook appreciates WTC's mix of theatre, from classics and musicals to more cutting-edge drama and young actors' shows, plus the innovative music, dance and special events the company brings to the O'Shaughnessy Center each season. "I honestly think we are doing many wonderful things that I want to continue," she says. The company may also explore a few additions in the future, including an independent film series and offering the stage to local musicians who are looking to play outside the bar scene. Whatever path the company follows, her predecessor, MacLaren, is confident "that Jen will lead the organization to great success for years to come."



Gayle MacLaren and Jennifer Asebrook
(Photo by Sonja Burgard)

Welcome to **William Harning**, the new education director at Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art in Great Falls. He received his BFA from Montana State University in May 2017, with a focus in ceramics, and begins his work as education director while completing his artist residency at The Square, culminating in an exhibition in June. Harning also serves as an educator/mentor for the Square's Curative Art Collective. Prior to arriving in Great Falls, he worked as an instructor at Detroit's Pewabic Pottery program, served as president of the Ceramics Guild at MSU, and organized several campus fundraising events. He was named Student of Excellence by the Fine Arts Department and received the Community Involvement Award from the Bozeman Chamber of Commerce. In his new role he hopes to help The Square provide "a robust, vibrant and constructive center for learning in the Great falls area."



William Harning

CONDOLENCES TO ...

The family and friends of writer, playwright and former executive director of the Myrna Loy **Ed Noonan**. He died of complications experienced during a heart procedure Jan. 20 at age 70. Born in Butte on March 11, 1949, Noonan crafted a series of plays about Butte and Helena. In 1989, his "War of the Copper Kings" was produced by Grandstreet Theatre as a Montana Centennial production. He received a Montana Arts Council Fellowship for a Butte play, "Taking History," and the Wilderness Institute's Matthew Hansen Endowment Award for "Montana Wilderness." A book of his poetry, *Noisy Soil*, was published in 1998, and he read his poems at many national, state and local events. His stories and poems included all manner of critters cavorting and philosophizing with various saints and heavenly hosts, as captured in his short story series, "Good St. Dominic's Cat." Noonan was the director of the Myrna Loy Center from 2000 until his retirement in 2015. He served on the Helena City Commission from 2016-2020 and had recently been hired as the temporary manager of the Helena Civic Center. He remained an active member of the adjunct staff at Carroll College for more than 30 years and was advising students until the day he died. In addition to serving



Ed Noonan (Photo by Eliza Wiley/
Helena Independent Record)

on numerous local and regional nonprofit boards during his 40 years in Helena, Noonan was also a presence at the national level, including stints with the National Performance Network, American Producers Association, Under the Radar and the National Dance Ensemble, among others. Krys Holmes, executive director at the Myrna, credits Noonan with "leading the Myrna Loy out of financial disaster in 2000." In a tribute on the art center's website, she writes, "I quickly learned that this man, with the sad-sack eyebrows and the ready smile, was neither sad nor placating – he was a deeply genuine combination of the sorrow bred of compassion, and the smile of someone who knows joy." After enumerating his accomplishments and praising his bold vision, she adds, "It takes tremendous courage to embody creativity, compassion and light. The only way to teach that is by example. And so have we all learned from Ed."

The family and friends of Missoula musician **Michael "Micki" Singer**. He died early New Year's Day in a tragic automobile accident, returning from a New Year's Eve gig. He was 63. He was born in Palo Alto, CA, on Aug. 26, 1956, and moved to Missoula from the San Francisco area in 2009. Singer's first love was jazz, although he mostly played rock and delved into country after moving to Montana. He was a drummer in the Lolo Creek Band, Soul City Cowboys, UFOkies, Zeppo, Party Trained and Strange Brew, frequently played with the Basement Boys, Micki's Allstars and Kimberlee Carlson and Western Union, and sat in with the Ed Norton Big Band. He also played music in Hamilton and Ravalli County, where his mother, Z'eva Singer, resides. His latest project was hosting the Local Exposure radio show on Missoula's KBGA, where he enjoyed showing off his friends' musical talents and helping up-and-coming musicians. Ed Stalling, a fellow drummer, described Singer as "a kind, gentle, caring person," and told the *Missoulian* he admired the musician's versatility and ability to play so many styles of music. "That's not as common as one would think anymore," he said. He also noted that Singer "played to serve the music," a quality that makes for an in-demand percussionist. His long-time partner Helena Vlasto echoed that view: "I think music was Micki's best friend," she told the *Missoulian*.



Michael "Micki" Singer

The family and friends of architect and Governor's Arts Award recipient **Robert Erick Fehlberg**. He died Aug. 17, 2019 in Pleasanton, CA, where he lived with his wife, artist Ladonna Fehlberg. The couple received the Governor's Arts Award in 1983. The architect was especially honored for donating his time, and supervising dozens of volunteers in transforming the Yellowstone County Jail into the Yellowstone Arts Center (now the Yellowstone Art Museum) in 1964. In a 2015 *Billings Gazette* story, Fehlberg said he wanted to maintain the character of the building, even opting to keep a cell door with bars inside the main front door. "The art center was a beautiful thing for Billings and for the whole region," he told the *Gazette*. "When we were pitching it, we talked it up because it was good for business in Billings." He served as the museum's first board president in 1964-65. He also helped found the Montana Institute for the Arts, and was president of that organization from 1963-1964, and was instrumental in converting Miles City's water treatment plant into the Custer County Art and Heritage Center (now WaterWorks Art Museum), which opened in 1977. Fehlberg was born April 28, 1926, in Kalispell and earned a degree in architecture from Montana State University in 1951. He was an architect in Kalispell before moving to Billings in 1958, where he joined Cushing Terrell Associates, and became vice president at CTA Architects Engineers in 1973. A member of the American Institute of Architects, he was president of the Montana chapter in 1965, and national director from 1971-1974.

Crow tell their own story (from page 1)

FOR MORE PHOTOS FROM THIS MONUMENTAL EXHIBIT, VISIT BILLINGSGAZETTE.COM

Members of many of the nation's tribes have begun to work with the institutions that are housing and presenting their history to rectify these inaccuracies, as well as working toward repatriation of sacred cultural items and ancestral remains.

Museums, with a mission to preserve and present artifacts, are often in conflict with tribes seeking the return of sacred and culturally significant objects. Such collaborations as the one Sanders has worked on provide guidance for a way forward that acknowledges a shared responsibility.

"Apsáalooke Women and Warriors" opened mid-March in Chicago with exhibitions at the Field Museum through April 2021, and at the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago until Aug. 21. More than 50 members of the Crow Tribe traveled to Chicago for the historic event.

"I've had my nose to the grindstone," said Sanders, who began organizing the Field Museum exhibition in April 2019 with support of co-curator Meranda Roberts.

Contemporary works in the exhibit were crafted by Apsáalooke people, including fashion designers Della Bighair-Stump and Bethany Yellowtail; artists including Ben Pease, Allen Knows His Gun, Mona Medicine Crow, Del Curfman, Jason Garcia and Kevin Red Star; bead artists Lydia Falls Down, Birdie Real Bird, Karis Jackson and Elias Not Afraid; hip-hop artist and fancy dancer Christian Parrish Takes the Gun (Supaman); photographer Adam Sings In The Timber; filmmaker Marty Lopez; and scholars and consultants including Phenocia Bauerle, Aaron Brien, JoRee LaFrance, Timothy McCleary and Charmaine Hill.

Apsáalooke war shields dating back to the turn of the 20th century are on display. These sacred shields obtained by the museum in the past century have never been shown publicly and are displayed alongside other historical objects of the Apsáalooke people along with their contemporary works.

Sanders, who holds degrees in anthropology and American Indian studies from Arizona State University, speaks the language of the Apsáalooke and was raised by her grandmother and elders.

"She is the grandmother's granddaughter," her relative, Shawn Real Bird, described during an opening ceremony on March 12 at the University of Chicago, where a tandem exhibit is on display. Such status in the tribe provided Sanders training in language, cultural ways, the clanship and religious systems, and rituals such as the sundance and sweat lodge ceremonies, Real Bird said.

That time spent with her elders prepared Sanders for the cultural battles ahead, and she's entered the museum space with the spirits of generations of warriors behind her, propelling her tenacity and desire to find ways to work within institutional walls.

"In the Crow language words are sacred, and there are beautiful words below those pictures that will carry on this way, this legacy, this tradition," Real Bird added of Sanders' work to present Crow culture to viewers at the Field Museum.

Both exhibitions are focused on different aspects of Apsáalooke culture, which was primarily an egalitarian society prior to colonization, and the role of women within the society. Gender roles within the tribe are explored while also looking at Apsáalooke warriors and the role of women within historical and contemporary times.

In Sanders' research, she found the stories of women to be largely excluded, and in representing history she places women's stories at the forefront. At the Field Museum, Sanders dedicated a room to war shields, and behind each shield is a large-scale portrait of a woman from the tribe's past, assuming the position of a guardian of that space and over those objects.

"We could tell stories of men in battle and counting coup, and it could be a glorious story,

but I wanted to tell a story about how the women watch over these things," Sanders said.

Crow voices in Chicago

Throughout the exhibit space, which flows through several rooms, music and language by Apsáalooke people is broadcast over the sound system. The language meshes with drumbeats, chants, and songs by hip-hop artist Supaman.

"Everyone who walks in here — every single Crow — is just overwhelmed with emotion because it's so powerful," said Velma Pretty on Top Pease, a language teacher on the Crow Reservation who traveled to Chicago to take part in the opening ceremonies. "It's not only what you see; it's what you hear, what you feel."



Large portraits of indigenous women and historic war shields of the Crow tribe dating back to the late 1800s are displayed the Field Museum's new exhibition "Apsáalooke Women and Warriors" in Chicago.

(Photo by Anna Paige/Billings Gazette)

With perspectives of fellow tribal members, Sanders presents Apsáalooke culture through a historical lens while also showcasing contemporary art and ideas. Their artistry and knowledge are shared through modern beadwork, fashion, video animation, painting, sculpture and photography alongside historical artifacts and sacred items, also made by tribal members.

Along with the war shields, historical items dating from the 1850s to 1890s include war shirts, elk tooth dresses, cradleboards, and medicine bundles from the Field Museum's permanent collection.

Items can be traced back to the late 1800s when collectors and field researchers approached Native people to collect objects, many of which ended up in museums with little context or were sold and traded throughout time.

Such objects, Sanders believes, have their own agency. "When they chose to leave the community when they did, it was an incredibly painful experience to all the families."

Sanders describes a belief system among the Apsáalooke that such sacred objects made the choice to leave and come to these museums. "The prayer has always been to come back to us, and that we will be reunited."

The Field in Indian Country

The Field Museum opened in 1894 during this time of collecting. The year prior, the museum's holdings debuted when Chicago hosted the World's Columbian Exposition, a six-month-long event that commemorated the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus arriving in the "new world."

"The exposition delighted visitors with 65,000 exhibits filled with natural wonders and cultural artifacts, many of which later found a permanent home in Chicago at the newly created Field Columbian Museum," according to the Field's website.

The collection now numbers more than 40 million artifacts and specimens, many obtained directly from Native peoples or from a system that museums employed for swapping items.

Some of the museum's archives and sacred items were obtained directly from Apsáalooke people in the early 1900s by Stephen Simms, a collector working on behalf of the Field Museum. Between 1901 and 1902, Simms obtained approximately 100 war shields from various Apsáalooke families, according to Sanders' research. Though Simms utilized an interpreter and wrote about the shields, it was limited and rough at best, often describing just their appearance.

"Native narratives were not important," Sanders said. "It was the objects that they were centered on."

Seeing the shields in the exhibit, a viewer begins to understand that these shields were not carried in battle, but were created in ceremony and held by families for generations. Cut from buffalo hide and shrunk and thickened by heat from fire, shields were adorned and decorated with pigments and items containing spiritual powers and significance to the families to whom the shield belonged.

A collaborative culture

The easy part of this exhibition was selecting contributors, said Sanders, who had a great wealth of scholars and artists within the

Crow Tribe to draw from and sought out people she described as incredibly kind, generous and humble.

"I picked people who I knew would be patient with this process," Sanders said. "Working with an institution like this is incredibly hard work and can be painful. A lot of times they are not ready to make space in areas that they believe should be more sanctified."

Meranda Roberts, co-curator of the Apsáalooke Women and Warriors exhibit and a person of Northern Paiute and Mexican-American heritage, is working at the Field to consult and help shape the renovations of its Native

American Hall, which was closed in 2018 temporarily after decades of static displays.

"It's very hard for them to get behind changing the model of what makes an exhibit," Roberts said. "You can't go about creating an exhibition for indigenous people the same way you can for a dinosaur, but that's the same model that they use."

Given that a museum's mission is to protect and preserve its collection, working with staffers has brought up plenty of discussion around culturally appropriate ways to handle and display's historical items.

"The museum is invested in their collection and this idea to preserve things for all eternity," said Sanders. "That's their job, and we can respect that, however we would do things very differently, and we are asking them to integrate some of these care systems into the way that we preserve material."

With permission from the Apsáalooke Tobacco Society, two sacred tobacco medicine bundles are on display. The belief is that these items should be seen and remembered.

Sanders describes medicine bundles as living beings. "We weep, and we pray, and these items need to feel that and hear that, and in turn they give off a life and a force that energizes us. We need to engage with them."

Powerful medicine

Such powerful medicine is the reason Sanders was called to the Field Museum, she said, and she believes the draw of such sacred items have called others to Chicago as well.

"Every single person who has come here is meant to be here and have an experience that will in some way continue to transform the world we live in, and Apsáalooke people happen to have a part of that," Sanders said.

While one of the exhibition's goals is to look and move forward, many of the Native women and girls the exhibition celebrates are missing or have been found dead, a staggering plight for indigenous women who are 10 times more likely to be murdered than the national average.

A signpost at the Field Museum indicates the exhibition is dedicated to Selena Not Afraid, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, and the nation's many missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

"We are singing the songs of women," Sanders said. "A lot of times, we forget how precious Native women and all women are. Sometimes, you need to be reminded what are the most precious parts of our culture."



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Mitchif Festival and Language Workshops

Mitchif Heritage Keepers host their annual Music and Art Festival June 12-14 at the Choteau Pavilion in Choteau. The event celebrates the history, music, food, language, art and culture of the Métis who live in Montana.

Mitchif is the language of the Métis people of Canada and the U.S., who are the descendants of First Nations women and fur-trade workers of European ancestry that mixes old European and First Nation languages. There are less than 600 fluent speakers of the Mitchif language in the world at present.

For 25 years, Montana's Métis relatives have met to preserve their heritage and create a space for the youth to learn their history. The festival features workshops by published writers and award-winning speakers as well as historical presentations by Métis elders and cooking demonstrations.

Admission is free and the festival is open to the public; the language workshops are sponsored in part through an Opportunity Grant from Humanities Montana.

For more information about the festival visit www.mitchifheritagekeepers.org.

The arts in the age of Coronavirus

By Kristi Niemeyer

The cascade of cancellations and postponements started as a trickle March 9, when the **C.M. Russell Museum** announced that it was postponing The Russell Auction – the centerpiece of Western Art Week in Great Falls – due to concerns about the potential infectious risk posed by COVID-19 to attendees and the community.

“We take this decision very seriously,” said Tom Figarelle, executive director of the museum. “The Russell Exhibition and Sale has a beloved 52-year tradition in Great Falls and is a primary source of revenue for the museum, but given the potential and likely spread of the Coronavirus at The Russell events, we feel postponement is in the best interest of the Great Falls community and our patrons, staff, volunteers and partners.”

By March 15, most of the remaining art auctions and shows that make **Western Art Week** an international attraction, followed suit, creating a significant hit to the community’s economy. As of press-time, the museum planned to announce the rescheduled date by the end of March and anticipated holding The Russell within the next six months.

Western Art Week is by no means the only casualty. By March 13, event cancellations were pouring in to LivelyTimes.com, Montana’s only statewide events calendar. And by Monday, March 16, most major events within a two-week to month-long span were either cancelled or postponed, and many venues, including art museums, theaters and art centers, had announced closures ranging from two weeks to a month.

The nonprofit arts community is especially reeling. Jen Asebrook, executive director of **Whitefish Theatre Company**, says the organization is faced with cancelling at least three of the season’s final five shows, which include a mix of concerts and community theatre productions. “And it is possible the entire remainder of the season will be cancelled, so it’s a big financial hit for us,” she says.

The company, housed at the O’Shaughnessy Center in Whitefish, suspended business operations at least through March 29. Rehearsals were also cancelled for an upcoming performance of “Sense and Sensibility,” and the performance itself will be rescheduled.

“We are hoping our season ticket holders – and perhaps some of our sponsors and others who have pre-bought tickets – will help us weather the storm a bit.”

Montana Actors’ Theatre in Havre was planning to stage “Mama Mia” March 13-28, but postponed the production when its theatre on the campus of

MSU-Northern was closed. Upcoming productions of “Ticked Off!” and “Charlie and

the Chocolate Factory” are also on hold.

“These productions are MAT’s main source of revenue and without them we find ourselves in a difficult position,” wrote the company’s executive producer, Jay Pyette.



The Myrna Loy: “Imagining new ways to serve our community.”

“If you considered a donation, but just didn’t get around to it – maybe now is the time.”

Zootown Art Community Center was busy planning its largest fundraiser of the year, the Mini Show, a gala art auction and dinner held at The Wilma in Missoula. Instead, ZACC is currently closed, and is moving the Mini Show to an online platform.

“Obviously, these are tough decisions for us as we are dependent on our daily operations and the Mini Show fundraising efforts to meet our operation budgets,” writes ZACC executive director Kia Liszak.

“This closure’s impact on our community, staff and our organization is potentially very serious, but it is our responsibility to make sure we are making decisions that keep everyone as safe as possible.”

While refunds are available for cancelled events, Liszak adds, “converting the value of your ticket purchase into a tax-deductible charitable donation to the ZACC would be much appreciated.”

This is not an isolated request. Many presenters across the state are encouraging patrons who can afford it to consider exchanging a pre-purchased ticket for a receipt, marking it as a donation.

The Myrna Loy in Helena was looking forward to a performance by the Irish band Dervish, which was also performing in Missoula the week of St. Patrick’s Day. But in light of travel bans, the concert was cancelled

and “Dervish are high-tailing home while they can,” says the arts center’s executive director, Krys Holmes.

In addition to owing \$7,000 in refunds for Dervish tickets, The Myrna also cancelled its annual fundraising gala, slated for March 14, and a concert by the Rastrelli Cello Quartet on April 9.

“We will dip into savings to support our staff as much as possible,” says Holmes. “I love my team fiercely, and will do everything I can for them.”

The Myrna crew is “also imagining new ways to serve our community through tough times. We all need music, laughter, and good movies to get us through. Maybe we can just do it differently.”

Rural performing arts groups are ending their seasons early too. **Mission Valley Live!** in Polson and Ronan cancelled a concert March 20 and

announced a few days later that Stringfever, a band from the United Kingdom that was slated to play eight concerts across Montana in April, had cancelled their tour.

“No one expects this virus to start to wane until possibly this summer,” writes board member Trish Rodrigue. She added that many

of the presenters she’s in touch with around the state have cancelled the rest of their performances this season.

At **Arts Missoula**, a hub of Missoula’s arts community, the focus was on how to move forward with SPARK! Arts Ignite Learning, a community-wide partnership that aims to expand arts programming in the schools, especially in light of possible long-term school closures. The annual Arts & Culture Awards lunch, slated for April 7 at the Doubletree Hotel, is



Mission Valley Live! cancels two concerts, and the third is iffy.

also postponed.

“Right now we are reacting in the moment, trying to be responsible, as is the case with any other industry,” writes executive director Tom Bensen. “And it’s a moving target, with new developments each day ... I assume that’s the case all over the state.”

Museums and galleries on hiatus

The **Clay Studio of Missoula** cancelled its annual Potsketch fundraiser, slated for April 9 at the University Center, as well as the preview reception and Potsketch exhibit. Discussions are underway about rescheduling the event for later this year, or moving the auction of ceramic art and drawings to an online platform. Spring classes are also postponed.

“This has been a tough and heartbreaking week for all of us, and a huge blow to all the small businesses and organizations in Missoula and beyond,” writes the studio’s executive director, Shalene Valenzuela. “But above all, we value the safety of our community members.”

The **Archie Bray Center for the Ceramic Arts** in Helena also shuttered its public facilities March 16, including classroom spaces and its sales gallery.

“We are planning for alternative offerings in our education program but for the safety of the students and instructors, we will be ceasing community class activities during this time,” wrote resident artist director Steven Young Lee.

Meanwhile, resident artists’ studios, offices and clay manufacturing remain in operation. Although the buildings are closed to the public, clay orders and gallery sales are still available via phone or email.

Most of the state’s major museums were temporarily closed, at least through the end of March. The staff at **Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art** in Great Falls was planning to use the two-week interval to develop



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I feel for what suffering is coming. And at the same time I think we are made for times like this. We’re resilient, generous, and strong. We will help each other through.

– Krys Holmes, The Myrna Loy

Maybe instead of trying our best to bring people to art, we’ll have to find new ways to bring art to people through their phones and computers.”

– Alyssa Cordova, Hockaday Museum of Art

People need the arts in times of crisis – to uplift our spirits, to bring us joy and a sense of community.

– Terri Elander, MCT

MCT cancels tour (from page 1)

By March 17, more than 120 offers of help and support had rolled in:

“Which team of the Emperors New Clothes is coming to Columbia, MO? TAD veteran here from 1994-95 with a kiddo to audition and some free drinks and food for the team! Let me know!! Xoxo” (Jennifer)

“Three extra rooms, beds, food, and parking available in Arkansas. Close to Dallas/Shreveport/Little Rock. And tons of board games to keep us occupied if you need to social distance with us here for a bit.” (Brittany)

“Omaha, NE smack dab in the middle of the country if you need a place on the way through! My dog, Dobby, always welcomes more hands to sneak him treats!” (Bridget)

“I didn’t see any teams in or near Wisconsin, but if anyone finds themselves in the area, they have a friend and safe place here – we have cheese to spare.” (Bailie)

“We have two spare rooms in San Jose, CA. My husband and I are both former

TADs and are now having to teach middle school theatre online. We’ll trade you room and board for some fun ideas and guest lecturing!” (Kristin)

“Kansas City KS/MO! Lots of TP and two golden retrievers – if anyone needs help reach out!” (Kathleen)

In preparation for the summer tour, MCT has hired 17 two-person teams to take the company’s whimsical productions to kids in hundreds of communities across North America and to military bases in the U.S. and around the world, including South Korea, Japan, Italy and Bahrain.

“Typically this time of year we’re looking for between 80 and 90 actors,” Elander says. “We’re being cautious.”

And yet, she adds, it’s times like this when artists are most important. “People need the arts in times of crisis – to uplift our spirits, to bring us joy and a sense of community.”

programming and work on maintenance projects at the historic building. “Please stay connected to the arts, by creating at home,” advised their email.

Art in Bloom, a new four-day event during which floral designers and garden club members create displays interpreting works of art in the galleries, is still scheduled for June 4-7.

The **Hockaday Museum of Art** in Kalispell is now closed at least through April 15. While director Alyssa Cordova had hoped to keep the museum open “as a place of respite and reflection,” she decided the risk was too great for both staff and patrons, many of whom are senior citizens.

The Hockaday staff will spend the downtime on behind-the-scenes work, and “use our creative thinking skills to find ways to support artists and art education through our online platform,” says Cordova.

Virtual tours are almost certainly afoot. “Maybe instead of trying our best to bring people to art, we’ll have to find new ways to bring art to people through their phones and computers.”

Like the recession of 2008, upheavals offer an opportunity for museums to grow and innovate. “It can be a learning opportunity,” suggests Cordova, “a way to stretch our thinking.”

Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings hopes to reopen April 1, and mentions its new exhibitions, including a solo show by Wyoming artist Neltje, “Tell me, why flowers?” **Missoula Art Museum** is closed March 16-April 6, and all MAM programs and events through May 1 are cancelled or postponed.

According to its website, the **Holter Museum of Art** in Helena had cancelled all events and programs “for the next couple of weeks as we continue to assess the situation.”

The **Emerson Center for the Arts and Culture** in Bozeman has closed its offices and public spaces including the theater, ballroom and galleries. The Emerson’s tenants continue to have access to their studios/galleries, unless mandated otherwise by local, state or federal governments. Staff members are working remotely or are on a staggered work schedule.

The **Montana Historical Society** in Helena announced March 17 that it had closed its museum galleries, Research Center, Museum Store, and the Original Governor’s Mansion to the public until further notice.

“We will continue to serve the public by staffing the Research Center desk for calls and email and encourage access to collections through our various digital channels,” said MHS Director Bruce Whittenberg. “Remember that access to the Montana Historical Society collections is not just about walking through the door.”

Symphonies on sabbatical

The state’s symphony orchestras were also forced to cancel and postpone concerts. All **Helena Symphony Orchestra and Chorale** rehearsals, performances and events are cancelled through April 15, including a Masterworks concert on March 28.

The season finale, “Carmen in Concert,” and an after party are still tentatively slated for May 2, although “the symphony will be closely monitoring its options throughout the next few weeks,” writes Scott Kall, director of Patron Services.

The **Great Falls Symphony** took an innovative approach. When a Chamber Music Series concert, *Independent Spirits* by the Chinook Winds, was cancelled for March 15, the performance was live streamed via Facebook, as will the remainder of the series (live performances are still tentatively scheduled for April 17 and 19 and May 15 and 17).

The orchestra postponed its “Jubilee” concert from March 28 until May 10. “Gloria” remains on the calendar for April 25, “but we are giving ourselves a couple of weeks to see how things are going,” says executive director Hillary Rose Shepherd. “These are unprecedented times and we don’t know what the future holds, but we are so thankful for the support of our community.”



Babcock Theater in Billings offers timely advice. (Photo by Jody Grant)

The **Missoula Symphony Orchestra**, which is recruiting a new music director, postponed the last concert of the “Pass the Baton” season, which was slated for April 18-19.

“Our final finalist, Zoe Zeniodi, resides in Greece and clearly she is unable to travel to the U.S. at this time,” says executive director Jo May Salonen. The Missoula Symphony Association office was temporarily closed in mid-March and employees were working remotely.

“As with the rest of the world, we take this situation day by day, hour by hour, in an effort to keep our musicians, patrons, staff and volunteers safe,” she adds.

Likewise, **Bozeman Symphony** is searching for a new music director, and the season’s final concert, still on the calendar for May 2-3, features Janna Hymes, the sixth and final candidate for the position, along with featured soloists traveling from across the state and country.

Whether these performances happen depends on ever-changing health guidelines. “Each day seems to present new information and new challenges,” says executive director Emily Paris-Martin.

The organization has cancelled Symphonic Choir rehearsals until further notice and plans to reschedule several events including Symphony at the Shane and the annual Underwriters Appreciation Reception, which was slated to showcase talented cellist Tristan Hernandez, runner-up for the 2019 Montana Association of Symphony Orchestras’ Young Artist Competition.

“Music is a healing force and we need that now,” says Paris-Martin. She also appreciates the support of the symphony’s board of directors, a strong network of colleagues across the state, “and symphony orchestras nationwide who are taking vital steps to move our organizations forward and provide an essential platform for resources.”

The **Billings Symphony** postponed its major production of “West Side Story.” While acknowledging that it was a difficult decision, the organization saw it as the best way to protect “the safety and well-being of our patrons, donors, musicians, guest artists, and all our symphony family.”

Glacier Symphony Orchestra and Chorale has cancelled its annual Spring Festival, April 25-26, and the **Butte Symphony’s** final concert of the season, “Unfinished Symphonies of Great Composers” on April 11 “is on hold until the COVID-19 situation is brought under control,” according to a Facebook post.

Theaters across the state go dark

Due to a major remodeling project, the **Alberta Bair Theater** in Billings offered a more limited season this year, with performances at a variety of venues, including the Babcock Theater and MSU Billings Petro Theater. “Finding Neverland,” a major touring production scheduled for April 2 at Metra-Park, was postponed, along with two student performances and a National Geographic Live show, “Ocean Soul.”

“We’re taking this show by show as more information becomes available and are heeding the advice of public health officials,” says Jody Grant, the ABT’s programming and marketing director. “Despite the performance side of operations, the renovation continues on schedule. We’re still planning on re-opening in September.”

The **Verge Theater** in Bozeman, which offers live theatre and comedy, is dark at the moment. “We hope that by helping ‘flatten the curve’ of infections locally, we can play a small part in allowing our first responders to do their best to keep everyone healthy,” says executive director Hilary Parker.

For now, the Verge is postponing classes, rehearsals and shows. “One of the best aspects of Verge is its sense of community, so we know you will stay focused on taking care of one another,” she wrote in an email announcement.

“Let’s use this time to connect and find a deeper appreciation for all that we have as well as to support those in need,” writes Parker. “We’ll be here, ready to welcome you back to Verge Theater in the very near future.”

Resilience is a theme echoed by Holmes at The Myrna. “I feel for what suffering is coming,” she writes. “And at the same time I think we are made for times like this. We’re resilient, generous, and strong. We will help each other through.”

Private sector hit hard too

Bars, restaurants and other gathering places were temporarily closing their doors, especially in light of federal recommendations that gatherings be limited to 10 people or fewer. **Logjam Presents**, the state’s largest concert promoter, postponed all live events for at least 30 days, beginning March 15. Logjam owns three concert venues, the Top Hat and The Wilma in Missoula and the Rialto in Bozeman. The move, including the restaurant closure, affects nearly 200 hourly employees.

Private galleries were also on hiatus. **Radius Gallery** in Missoula, which moved into elegant new quarters this spring, announced that it was closed to the general public until further notice. It will, however, be open by appointment, and “fastidiously follow health protocols.”

“Giving a little of each day over to creativity’s boundless expression is an excellent meditative practice, and not a bad way to spend a bit of our self-seclusions,” wrote co-owner Lisa Simon. “The business and busy-ness of life will catch up with us all soon enough.”

And in announcing a decision to “keep our doors closed until the worst of this has passed,” **Persimmon Gallery** in Bigfork added: “so many beautiful items to touch and try on. We decided it’s not a great idea right now.”

Some bookstores, including **Chapter One** in Hamilton and **Fact & Fiction** in Missoula, were tailoring their services to the times. Chapter One offered free delivery in town and free shipping the week of March 16. The store also suggested that readers check out libro.fm, an online source of audiobooks that splits proceeds with independent bookstores.

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The Top Hat in Missoula has postponed live music for 30 days.



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Social distancing is the recipe to stop the spread of the virus among us, but it is also the death of festivals that bring people together to dance in the streets and celebrate collective joy to live music in the fullness of the short sweet summer in the Northern Rockies.

— George Everett,
Montana Folk Festival

Giving a little of each day over to creativity’s boundless expression is an excellent meditative practice, and not a bad way to spend a bit of our self-seclusions. The business and busy-ness of life will catch up with us all soon enough.

— Lisa Simon, Radius Gallery



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Big Sky Reads offers stipends to book groups

The Montana Center for the Book supports public book clubs in rural areas that engage in deeper, thought-provoking discussions about literature.

The Big Sky Reads program, now in its second year, provides \$500 stipends to book clubs for trained discussion leaders, author visits, book shipping, marketing, and other costs that enhance the humanities value of a program. Book clubs must be open to the public and meet in a public space or school.

All book clubs supported by Montana Center for the Book contribute reading lists, discussion questions, event times and more to the program's Facebook group, providing a valuable resource to find new books, new participants, discussion questions and facilitators.

The program funds up to 10 clubs each year; there's no deadline and the application is easy.

For details, head to www.humanitiesmontana.org/big-sky-reads/.

Montana Heritage Center moves forward

Gov. Steve Bullock ceremonially signed a bill Jan. 16 that provides funding for construction of the Montana Historical Society's new Montana Heritage Center.

Bullock was surrounded by proponents of Senate Bill 338, and noted that the ceremonial signing was the crowning achievement of the decade-long effort to build the new facility. He added that the new Heritage Center is for all Montanans, as well as for visitors to the Treasure State.

"We have incredible treasures ... and this is an opportunity to see what we have, not just for people here but for people across the world," Bullock said. "It's exciting that Democrats and Republicans came together and said 'Let's finally get this done.'"

"This is not the Helena historical society but the Montana Historical Society," he added. "It's a treasure everyone in Montana should enjoy and share."

The new structure and renovations to the existing building are expected to cost about \$52 million. After an in-depth study on where it will be located, the Department of Adminis-



Montana Historical Society Director Bruce Whittenberg watches Gov. Steve Bullock as he ceremonially signs Senate Bill 338, which authorizes funding for the new Montana Heritage Center. Seated with Bullock are Sen. Jill Cohenour, Sen. Terry Gauthier and Rep. Julie Dooling, who were all instrumental in efforts to pass the bill.

tration decided last fall to build a new facility on the Capitol campus, just a few steps from the Capitol building.

The new facility will be constructed across Sixth Street from the current home of the Montana Historical Society, and the old building will be renovated. Along with housing Montana's history, the facility will provide public and legislative meeting space, food ser-

vice, and other amenities for everyone who comes to the Capitol to experience Montana.

Funding for the project was authorized by the 2019 Montana Legislature. Some of the construction and renovation costs will be covered by accommodations tax revenue, which is estimated to provide about \$38 million. Existing bonding of about \$6.5 million is available, and the Montana Historical Society has committed to raise private contributions of \$10 million for galleries and exhibits.

Russ Katherman, chair of the Building Committee and administrator of the State Architecture and Engineering Division, told the society's board of trustees that it may take 12 to 18 months to arrive at a design, which he hopes to present to the trustees next May or June.

"We expect it will take two to two-and-a-half years for construction," he predicted. "It will be museum-quality construction, which is pretty intense. We'll use high-quality, durable materials that will last for the next 100 years."

New director takes helm at Humanities Montana

Humanities Montana recently announced that Randi Lynn Tanglen takes the reins as executive director effective June 1. Tanglen is currently an associate professor of English and director of the Robert and Joyce Johnson Center for Faculty Development and Excellence in Teaching and director of the Gender Studies program at Austin College in Sherman, Texas.

She replaces Ken Egan, who retired last fall. Longtime board member Scott Crichton has been serving as interim executive director.

"Randi Tanglen rose to the top in our nationwide search," said Crichton. "She is a real find for Humanities Montana – an academic with experience in program administration, public humanities advocacy, and donor relations and philanthropy. Her demonstrated commitment to humanities engagement, especially in small communities, in order to support an inclusive, democratic society makes her perfect for this job."

The Montana native was born in Sidney and received degrees from Rocky Mountain College in Billings and the University of Montana in Missoula, where she wrote a master's thesis on Montana women writers. She taught English at Billings West High

School and received a fellowship grant from Humanities Montana in 2002 to research the cultural, literary and historical significance of Montana women's community cookbooks. She used that grant to travel the state, visiting local museums and archives and giving presentations at libraries and civic organizations.

Tanglen earned her doctorate in English from the University of Arizona. Since 2008 she has taught at Austin College where she offers classes on U.S. women and minority writers. Her co-edited volume with Brady Harrison of the University of Montana, *Teaching Western American Literature*, will be released in June.

Tanglen regularly participates in academic conference panels about public humanities engagement and publishes opinion pieces on literature and culture in the *Dallas Morning News* and *Texas Tribune*. As director of the



Randi Lynn Tanglen

Johnson Center at Austin College since 2015, her innovative and creative leadership has transformed the center into a model faculty-development program.

Tanglen notes that as a faculty member, she has benefited from National Endowment for the Humanities, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and local foundation philanthropy to enhance her

teaching and research. "I am eager to work with the Humanities Montana staff and board of directors to ensure the continued vibrancy and support of humanities outreach in my beloved home state."

"We are simply delighted that Randi is coming back to Montana to share her leadership and vision with Humanities Montana," said Aaron Pruitt, chair of the organization's board of directors.

Learn more at humanitiesmontana.org.

Arts in the age of Coronavirus (from previous page)

Fact and Fiction directed readers to its website, "open 24 hours a day and available in your living room," and offered "curbside service if you want to avoid shipping costs and limit public interaction." For homebound locals, "we will deliver books ourselves right to your doorstep."

The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana had conducted multiple online surveys March 11-15 to gauge the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on traveler and travel-related business owners, and was planning to send another batch the week of March 23. To track results, head to itr.uvm.edu.

A festival season?

George Everett, executive director of Mainstreet Uptown Butte and the **Montana Folk Festival**, said plans are still in the works for Montana's largest outdoor festival, July 10-12. The nonprofit event draws more than 150,000 people to historic Uptown Butte to see more than 200 musicians, dancers and craftspeople from across the U.S. and around the globe; admission is free. The economic



Crowd gathers at the Original Stage during the Montana Folk Festival. (Photo by Joshua J. Pate-Terry)

impact to Butte is approximately \$8 million; the region and state reap an estimated \$25 million annually.

"As the threat of the spreading virus becomes a reality in Southwest Montana, and indeed throughout the nation and the world, we have been developing contingency plans to cancel or postpone the Montana Folk Festival if required by concerns for public safety," Everett writes.

postpone the festival depending on how high the risks remain for our audiences," he writes.

"Social distancing is the recipe to stop the spread of the virus among us, but it is also the death of festivals that bring people together to dance in the streets and celebrate collective joy to live music in the fullness of the short sweet summer in the Northern Rockies."

His advice: "Wait and hope for a change in the situation and wash our hands a lot."

ABOUT MUSIC

— By Mariss McTucker

Russ Nasset: *He Was Singin' This Song*

Missoula's honky-tonkin' music icon Russ Nasset, he of the burn-barrel voice and fleet-fingered guitar licks, has produced another (mostly) solo CD. He has accompaniment on a few numbers, but mostly it's just him, his distinctive baritone sound, gravelly and expressive, and a guitar.

Joining him on this stockpile of folk and cowboy pieces are a couple of family members: son Sam (who plays with his dad in The Revelators) plays sleek electric guitar on four tracks, and granddaughter Ella sings on Glen Ohrlin's "My Home's in Montana."

John Parker adds an old-time feel with clawhammer banjo on the traditional song, "Tyin' Knots in the Devil's Tail"; David Horgan spills sweet syrup via lap steel on "Cool Water"; and Richie Reinholdt thumps the upright bass on Harlan Howard's bittersweet "The Blizzard."

Nasset is a rocker, yes, but his riveting interpretations of these cherished nuggets command attention. Tom Russell's "The Sky Above and the Mud Below," a colorful tale of horse thieves and a preacher who takes revenge, is putty in Nasset's hands. His voice, still soaked in the whiskey and smoke it gobbled in days of old, smolders and cracks, and he reaches way down for hushed bass notes at the end of verses. Same with the western waltz, "The Streets of Laredo," where he deploys his deep bass to sing the "So beat the drum slowly" chorus.

And who can resist the wistful "Shenandoah"? Nasset gives it a loping country feel, and plays the melody line on baritone guitar while Sam joins in on electric. Russ sings the lyrics with his voice doubled, too. It's perfect.

The elder Nasset has been at this for a long time, and the years shine in his voice. We are fortunate to have an artist like him in our midst.

Montana A Cappella Society: *Faith, Love, Adventure — More Stories of America*

The longtime community choral group from Hamilton, christened by Gov. Steve Bullock as "Montana's Ambassador of Song," has released a follow-up to *Stories of America*, an album inspired by attending a choral festival in Cork, Ireland, in 2013. This new effort features music they sang at the invitation-only International Choral Festival in Tuscany, Italy, last summer, where they performed in three churches.

Along with sacred pieces the group learned for the trip, the recording features popular standards from their repertoire, and the finale, "So Long, Farewell, Goodbye," written by Scotty Morris of Big Bad Voodoo Daddy.

All tracks were recorded live in Hamilton's historic St. Paul's Episcopal Church except for the 12th century "Salve Regina," recorded during the society's last performance in Italy, at the Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta in Montecatini Terme.

Arranger/artistic director and founder Don Matlock, since retired, adapted many of the pieces. The traditional 19th century spirituals include "Children Go Where I Send Thee," "Down to the River to Pray," and a great arrangement of "My Lord, What a Mornin'." It's a hymn that starts quietly, then morphs into a march, building to a crescendo that's glorious in its depth, and ringing to the rafters before ending in a hush. Wow!

The Green/Homer/Brown swinger, "Sentimental Journey," opens with a hollered "1-2-3-4-1," and sports a train toot. Jerry Ross's "Steam Heat" has lots of hisses and a snappy feel, and Antonio Carlos Jobim's "The Girl from Ipanema" sways with soft palm-tree ambience.

The 17-voice choir sings many leads in unison, particularly on the sacred music, and layers the vocals in almost every song for a lush feel. Superb engineering by Jason Hicks (of Joan Zen fame) shows how the Montana A Cappella Society sounds in a live setting. No wonder they were chosen to perform in Europe, twice!

Off in the Woods: *Greenhouse*

The exceptional second album from one of Montana's premier dance bands is out. It's been a long time coming, but well worth the wait since 2011's *Smoke Signals*.

The Polson fellas describe themselves as "rock'n' reggae roll with a funk-flavored soul." Funky beats, sharp arrangements, whiz-bang chops from all players, and stellar singing from front-man Jon Schumaker typify their sound. They rented the versatile Hammond organ to simulate some instruments and recorded the album at an empty Wilma theater, so the sound quality is superior to boot.

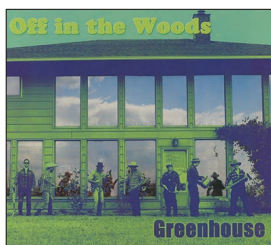
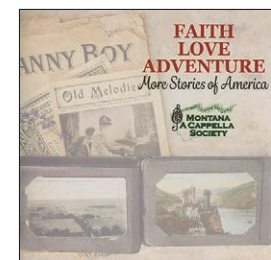
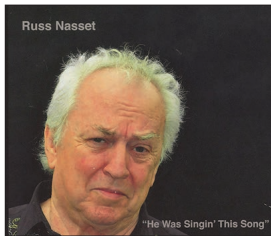
Rarely can one voice carry a whole album, let alone a whole night of performing. But Schumaker's elastic pipes are up to the task. His tenor is in the range of a Michael McDonald, say, but with more depth and earthiness.

The original four-piece includes Schumaker (vocals, guitar, and bass), Sean Burrell (bass and guitar), Nathan Noble (drums), and Layne McKay (sax, guitar and the album's sound engineer). They are complemented by Kyle Daugherty (trombone and shaker), Kai Salmonson (auxiliary percussion and bass) and Kia Adibzadeh (keys).

Band members penned all nine numbers, including a few pure instrumentals. Some pieces, such as "Candy Before Dessert" with its many moods and tempo changes, sound like film music. Their dynamic arrangements ebb and flow, tightly wrapped in scatter-shot rhythms propelled by killer drum and bass lines, and crisp horn phrases.

"Faces in the Mountains" is jumpy with a percussion interlude, and "American Muscle" finds Schumaker mixing a little gravel into his vocals. "Treading Water" morphs from reggae to rock and back again; and Schumaker displays his vocal agility with "Soul Revival," traveling way up there on some falsetto "oohs."

"Rez Rider" is a slowly rockin' instrumental that shakes the hips and struts all over the place. It's got a catchy, repetitious horn melody that never



gets old, and a slight Atlanta Rhythm Section nuance.

The group's seasoned sound is the complete package. They get the crowd dancin', and even if you don't dance, it's a pleasure just to listen!

Sweetgrass Blues Band: *Ghost Dance*

This nine-year-old electric blues band from Helena has its inaugural CD out. It features 10 homemade rockers by founder and guitarist Mark Dixon. He's originally from Oklahoma City, and has been a Helenan since 1994.

Dixon took up the electric guitar at age 15 and brings a southern sensibility to his work; influences like Stevie Ray Vaughan and ZZ Top waft through the pieces.

Joining him are Helena natives Trevor Hult, an in-demand studio bassist, and timekeeper Jay Hutchinson thwacking the drum skins. Great Falls native Cole Bass, who daylights as a high-school band teacher, adds tenor sax and keys. Laurie Zupan shares vocals on "Cowboy Cadillac" and "When the Lights Go Out."

With Dixon on lead vocals and Hutchinson and Bass singing harmony, the fellas put out the funk, with lots of sax and guitar leads. The Allman Brothers, B.B. King and Van the Man seep into the music, along with Motown and jazz styles.

On "Buddy's Blues," the band expands on and quickens the chunky opening chords of the Guess Who's "American Woman"; honkin' sax and crisp trap work give way to fluid guitar lines as Dixon sings. Hip-shakin' country rocker "Cowboy Cadillac" finds Dixon trading his truck for a fast Caddy to chase women because the oldie "won't do much more than 85."

The slowed-down foot-stomper, "Black Widow," has snaky guitar and sax; superstition abounds in black cats, bad dreams and bad luck. On "Summertime Girl," with its fuzzed-out guitar and '60s chord progression, Dixon sings about the idyllic days of summer and falling in and out of love.

There's even one for Billings: "Magic City Strut" swaggers. It's a finger-snapping shuffly blues instrumental that has rockin' bass.

This is a nice first effort from a savvy blues band!

The Lil Smokies: *Tornillo*

Missoula's rising stars, The Lil Smokies, have put out their third studio album, named after the Texas town where it was recorded. After touring tirelessly for days on end, the band hunkered down with accomplished producer/engineer Bill Reynolds at the Sonic Ranch studio near El Paso to regroup and record.

Band members Matt Cornette, banjo, Scott Parker, bass, Matt "Rev" Rieger, guitar and vocals, Andy Dunnigan, Dobro and vocals, and Jake Simpson, fiddle and vocals, decided this time around they would focus on shared songwriting. Three songs are from Rieger, one from Simpson, six from Dunnigan, and one by all three ("World's on Fire").

They aspire here to write in the folk-rock style of a major influence, the Laurel Canyon (California) songwriters of the '70s (think Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, and Buffalo Springfield, among many others). Each performer sings his own compositions, and they split up the arranging, too, with stellar harmonies contributed by all vocalists.

Mirroring that style alone would make them mere imitators, but when it's built upon a foundation of galloping, unrelenting tempos and white-hot instrumental work, you have something new.

Slow silky fiddle starts "Carry Me," next comes a whispery vocal intro from Dunnigan. There are soaring harmony vocals on the chorus that stop abruptly for a cappella harmony on "untie these knots, carry me." Blazing fiddle follows, and presently the song tamps down and fades quietly.

Rieger's snappy "Wheel on the Water" has a chunky feel, and crisp fiddle/Dobro snippets shine between verses. Rieger's earthy voice, contrasting with Dunnigan's smooth baritone, gets reverb-y on "but the quiet never lies." Simpson sings his "Life Out There," a folksy, country loper with pretty harmonies.

"World's on Fire" finds banjo kickstarting the song along with Dunnigan's vocals. There's monster fiddle sawing and a knock-out banjo break, then all quiets. Three voices enter, one at a time on separate verses, till it sounds almost like a round. "Tornillo," the finale, is a slow ballad on piano. It's an un-Smokies-like contribution that's refreshing, and it works.

The group is on a winter-spring tour throughout the States and Canada, picking up new fans, no doubt!

The Knee Jürk!: *Hot Buttered Holiday*

Although it's long after the Christmas season, the crackerjack EP from this Butte duo bears listening to anytime. Jock Holmes and Russ Nelson call themselves a "semi-acoustic supersonic duo incorporating all that big-band beat." I'd say that's about right, considering all the sounds the two men make on their first project.

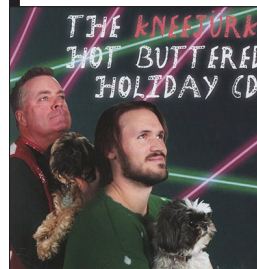
Both are schooled on their instruments, and have a lot of musical experience. Lead singer Nelson learned guitar mostly from his uncle, John Montoya, a well-known solo guitarist and singer in the Butte area; he also plays in Shellshock Lullaby. Holmes was bassist/vocalist in The Max and sang and drummed for Slakkr.

Since getting together four years ago to play Christmas strolls, the duo has gained popularity around southwest Montana for their dynamic live shows. Influences from bands like The Replacements and Matchbox 20, among others, run through their original songs.

Nelson plays all guitars and keys, programs computer instruments and sings all leads, with the exception of Holmes on the riotous "A John Mayer XXX-Mas." They both sing backup, and wrote four of the songs. "All I'll Say" is by The Max's Kyle Brenner.

The EP is funny and zany, with sometimes cartoon-like electro-pop stylings, played with a sense of humor. "You're a Buzzkill Mr. Grinch" speaks for itself. "Consuelo del Solsticio" is unexpected; it's a pretty instrumental that shows off their expertise.

"Jürk (Holiday Mix)," has fuzzed-out guitars à la Buffy the Vampire Slayer, firefight arpeggios, and crashing drums. Lots of catchy riffs and abrupt stops, with "Jürk!" repeated over and over, lend to its hypnotic sound. Let's hope for a full-length CD from them soon!



9

State of the Arts welcomes CDs

State of the Arts welcomes CD submissions by Montana musicians for inclusion in the About Music section. The recordings must be professional, commercially available, full-length CDs recorded within the past 12 months, with cover art and liner notes. Reviews also appear at livelytimes.com, Montana's statewide source for arts and entertainment.

Brief biographical information on band members would be helpful to the writer.

Please send submissions to CD reviewer Mariss McTucker, P.O. Box 81, Dixon, MT, 59831.

ABOUT BOOKS

Non-fiction/Memoir

It Comes Around Again: A Memoir

By Rudy Autio

This memoir, published posthumously, offers an intimate look at iconic Montana artist Rudy Autio, one of the important figures in the contemporary clay movement rooted in the 1950s.

Through the early 1990s, Autio sporadically worked on a memoir, which he wrote for his children, but hoped would be relevant to artists as well. “We knew about the memoir and we’d always enjoyed it, so we thought why don’t we use that? Let Rudy tell his own story,” his daughter, Lisa Autio, told the *Missoulian*.

The family worked with artist-curator Dennis Kern and his Rattlesnake Valley Press on the design, and incorporated historical photographs for a small-run first edition. More pictures were added for a second run that accompanied an expansive exhibit of Autio’s works, on display Jan. 24-Feb. 29 at Radius Gallery in Missoula.

The memoir focuses primarily on his early days growing up in a Finnish immigrant family in Butte, his time in the Navy at the end of World War II, establishing the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena with another ground-breaking clay artist, Peter Voulkos, and how he built his early murals using brickyard clay.

Later he helped noted historian K. Ross Toole, the new director of Montana Historical Society Museum in Helena, with a number of dioramas, and was hired by the University of Montana in 1957 to build what would become a nationally known ceramics program.

He discusses noteworthy students he learned from during his 28-year teaching career and various commissions he created during those years. Autio also describes some of the early workshops he gave in the 1970s and talks about his first trips to Finland, where he met relatives and artists alike, and worked as a guest artist at the Arabia Factory in Helsinki. The book also traces how his work evolved over the course of many decades, with funny stories balancing the ordeals of making a living and supporting a family as an artist.

Autio died in 2007 from leukemia at age 80, and his wife, modernist artist Lela Autio, died in 2016 at age 88. The couple’s four children continue to tend the couple’s rich legacy, including a studio filled with the art they made, and hundreds of works the couple collected from friends and artists they admired.

Like many artists, Autio was “never thinking about posterity,” his daughter told the *Missoulian*. Instead, he was focused on “the moment right in front of you where you’re working spontaneously.”

Rediscovering America: A 21st Century Journey

By Brian Kahn

With *Rediscovering America*, Brian Kahn – the host of Montana Public Radio’s “Home Ground” interview series – takes the reader on an extraordinary journey.

During a trip to Moscow, he was invited to accompany the Russian TV journalist Vladimir Pozner and an 11-person Russian film crew on a 50-day, round-trip drive across the United States, following the path two Soviet journalists took during the Great Depression. He served as the American co-host and helped select and interview people along the way. The crew asked everyone from the mayor of Las Vegas to a haberdasher in Memphis, “What does America mean to you?” The answers are often surprising and relevant — and always poignant.

As with the initial journey, the new adventure aimed to show the Russian audience what America and Americans were really like. As it turned out, one of the people who learned the most was the author himself.

In his intimate travelogue, Kahn offers a fascinating record of the landscape and people they encountered – a diverse and enlightening spectrum of Americans who compose the living fabric of our country.

Author and critic Rick Newby writes: “Kahn’s bracing travelogue, full of surprises and portents, offers a clear-eyed look at the conflicted reality in America’s 21st century, but manages what might seem impossible in these dark times, to offer hope for an American life ‘more real, more deeply meaningful ...’ This book is essential reading for every citizen who cares for the health of the Republic.”

Kahn is also the author of *Real Common Sense*. *Rediscovering America* is published by Drumlummon Institute in Helena.

Voices of Yellowstone’s Capstone: A Narrative Atlas of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness

Edited by Jesse Logan and Traute Parrie

This unique collaboration between writers, artists and cartographers travels both the physical and intellectual terrain of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. Although the atlas – true to its name – contains maps, it is not a guidebook.

“Instead, in the way wilderness users explore physical trails on the landscape, readers are invited to explore the intellectual trails ... [coming] away understanding not only the importance of designated wilderness and public lands, but the interconnectedness of humans and wild places over time.”

Voices of Yellowstone’s Capstone is made up of 28 engaging essays paired with richly illustrated maps by artists and map-makers,



ers, including Courtney Blazon, Travis Burdick, Monte Dolack and others. The long list of writers includes Dan Aadland, Susan Austin, Doug Chabot, John Clayton, Seabring Davis, Shane Doyle, Gary Ferguson, Peter Halstead, Ed Kemmick, Scott McMillion and Bernard Quetchenbach.

Editors Traute Parrie and Jesse Logan are both long-time veterans of the Forest Service. The book is published by the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation, a nonprofit group devoted to supporting stewardship of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness through “boots-on-the-ground” experiences.

Six Hundred Generations: An Archaeological History of Montana

By Carl M. Davis

Accomplished Missoula archeologist Carl Davis takes a fascinating look at the archeological evidence of Montana’s long Indigenous human history.

The fourth largest state encompasses everything from snow-capped peaks and their forested flanks, to rolling prairies, wide river valleys and eroded badlands.

“Over the millennia, people from the Columbia Plateau, Great Basin and Great Plains came to this place we now call Montana to live, hunt, trade, raid and socialize with each other, making the area a cultural crossroads,” he writes. “This convergence and interaction of Native groups from different regions is what makes Montana archeology both fascinating and complicated – it tells not one story, but many.”

Davis focuses on 12 unique archaeological sites, taking readers on an extraordinary journey through time, technologies and cultures. Beginning with the First Americans who followed mammoths into this landscape, he describes how Native Americans lived, evolved, and flourished here for thousands of years. At the same time, he offers insights into the study of archaeology, “the scientific recovery and analysis of material remains – ancient garbage!” He also traces the cyclical changes in climate that affected the migrations, hunting and foraging of ancient peoples.

More than 70 color photographs and numerous illustrations by the author accompany the 320-page book’s engaging and accessible writing.

Published by Riverbend Publishing of Helena, *Six Hundred Generations* was recently named the Best Popular Book for 2020 by the Society for American Archaeology, and was lauded by SAA president, Dr. Joe Watkins, “an outstanding contribution to archaeology.”

Raised in Dillon and a graduate of the University of Montana, Davis worked for 35 years as an archaeologist for the Forest Service, retiring in 2015 as the regional archaeologist for the U.S. Forest Service Northern Region in Missoula. In 2018 he was honored with the Montana Heritage Keeper Award from the Montana Historical Society.

The Meditation Process: Raja Yoga and Buddhist Shamatha

By Lyle Olson

The Meditation Process is a practical study of concentration meditation for intermediate and beginning meditators. Based on more than 40 years of wide personal experience and research, the book offers a close look at what the meditator actually does.

Author Lyle Olson gives concise, practical suggestions for posture, breathing, dealing with thoughts, brain hemisphere functions, establishing one-pointed mind, turning the mind inward, relaxation, non-attachment, and more. Over 65 professional photos taken in India and Nepal add a sense of reality and vibrancy to the contemplative lifestyle.

As the author notes: “It’s helpful to have a map describing the stages of meditation; to know where you are going, how you are getting there, and when you are going off course.”

Olson is a retired high school counselor and teacher, who turned to the study of various religious traditions and Eastern philosophy to answer such perennial questions as “what is life for?” He entered the graduate school in Yoga Science and Philosophy at the Himalayan Institute and served as photographer for *Yoga International* and the institute for 15 years, including two years spent in Indian ashrams.

“Meditators struggling with plateaus or looking for a comprehensive, detailed consideration of process will savor this hefty guide to building a meditation practice.” (*Publisher’s Weekly*)

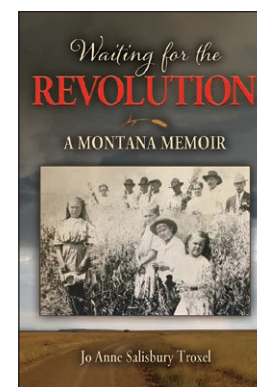
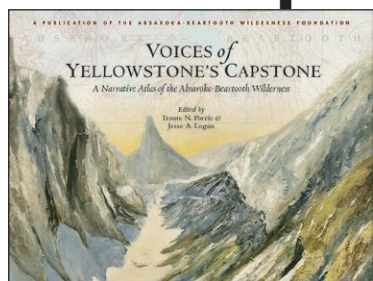
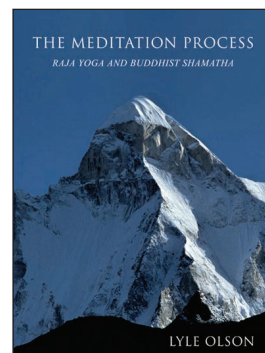
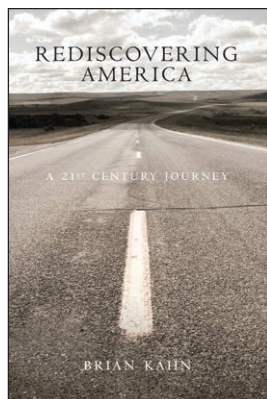
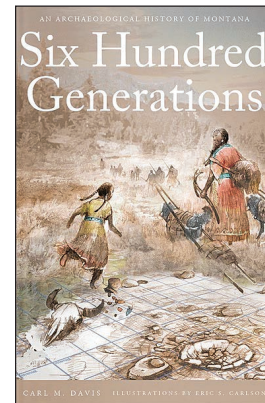
Olson now lives in the Salish Mountains of northwest Montana, surrounded by nature, critters and books.

Waiting for the Revolution: A Montana Memoir

By Jo Anne Troxel

Born during the radical era of early 20th century politics, author Jo Anne Troxel is the product of a tumultuous affair between her idealistic mother, Marie Chapman Hanson, and the infamous Communist sheriff of Plentywood, Rodney Salisbury. Her engrossing memoir explores her complicated family history, the hardscrabble life carved out by the inhabitants of Montana’s eastern plains, and the challenges faced by three often parentless children whose only option for survival was to band together.

Troxel describes her book as a gift to her parents “and to all of us who know that life and love are complex and rich, that taking risks for a better life can be fraught with unintended consequences, and that, in the end, our stories remain after we are gone.”



10

How to submit a book for State of the Arts

To submit a book published in the past 12 months by a Montana author for inclusion in the About Books section of *State of the Arts*, email the following information to kristi@livelytimes.com or mac@mt.gov:

- Title, author, publisher and month/year published;
- A brief description of the book (no more than 200 words), and a short bio of the author;
- A cover image: minimum 200 dpi in pdf or jpg format;
- If other publications or authors have reviewed the book, send a brief sampling of those remarks.

Books submitted to *State of the Arts* appear in this publication at the Montana Arts Council’s discretion and as space permits, and will not necessarily be reprinted at Lively Times.com.

ABOUT BOOKS

After moving to western Montana, Troxel grew up “in a \$39 dollar shack on 10 acres by the railroad tracks” on the Flathead Reservation in Arlee. She earned a degree and taught English and creative writing at Bozeman High School for 23 years and conducted writing workshops around the state. In 2015, she wrote and published a book of poetry, *Mean Dog Blues*, and contributed to the collection *Bozeman from the Heart*.

Montana Quick Facts

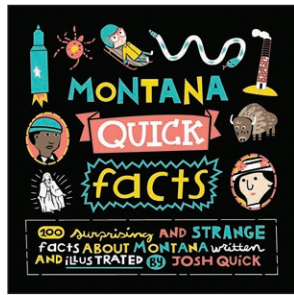
By Josh Quick

Missoula-based author and illustrator Josh Quick says he marvels at trail placards in state parks, instructional illustrations and hand-drawn maps, losing himself in “their simple beauty.” *Montana Quick Facts* is his own effort to offer “fanciful facts,” depicted as hand-sketched interpretive signs.

The 112-page collection of original illustrations shares strange but true stories about Montana. Discover the contents of a Butte coalminer’s lunch, learn how many intercontinental ballistic missiles are housed in Hi-Line silos, meet pioneering modernist painter Isabelle Johnson, and find details on the Grateful Dead’s one Montana concert.

Quick told the *Lake County Leader* that the book originated when he began illustrating interesting facts about Montana with custom typography, and posting them to social media in his spare time. By the time he accrued 20 to 30 hand-drawn facts, he decided to strive for 100 facts, and compile them in a book.

In his own words, the *Montana Quick Facts* explores “the weirdness of life playing out in the West.”



Fiction

The Blaze

By Chad Dundas

Having lost much of his memory from a traumatic brain injury sustained in Iraq, Army veteran Matthew Rose is called back to Montana after his father’s death to settle his affairs, and hopefully to settle the past as well. It’s not only a blank to him, but a mystery.

Why as a teen did he suddenly become sullen and vacant, abandoning the activities and people that had meant most to him? How did he, the son of hippy activists, wind up enlisting in the first place?

Then on his first night back, Matthew sees a house go up in flames, and it turns out a local college student has died inside. And this event sparks a memory of a different fire, an unsolved crime from long ago, a part of Matthew’s past that might lead to all the answers he’s been searching for. What he finds will connect the old fire and the new, a series of long-unsolved mysteries, and a ruthless act of murder.

The Associated Press lauds the book as “both a cleverly plotted mystery and a touching account of a wounded veteran trying to rebuild his life ... and the writing is superb throughout, occasionally verging on poetry.”

“In Dundas’ assured hands, one man’s search for answers makes for a lyrical, riveting meditation on memory,” writes *Entertainment Weekly*.

Dundas earned his MFA from the University of Montana, and his short fiction has appeared in the *Beloit Fiction Journal*, *Sycamore Review*, *Sou’Wester* and *Thuglit*. Since 2001, he’s worked as a sportswriter for national outlets including ESPN, NBC Sports, *Sporting News*, as well as local and regional newspapers. A fourth-generation Montanan, he lives with his wife and children in Missoula.

The Small Crimes of Tiffany Templeton

By Richard Fifield

The Serpent King meets *Girl in Pieces* in this moving and darkly funny story about a teenage girl coming of age and learning how to grieve in small-town Montana.

Tiffany Templeton is tough. She dresses exclusively in black, buys leather jackets that are several sizes too big, and never backs down from a fight. She’s known in her tiny Montana town as Tough Tiff, and after her shoplifting arrest and a stint in a reform school, the nickname is here to stay.

But when she comes back home, Tiffany may not be the same old Tough Tiff that everybody remembers. Her life is different now: her mother keeps her on an even shorter leash than before, she meets with a probation officer once a month, and she’s still grieving her father’s recent death.

As Tiffany navigates her new life and learns who she wants to be, she must also contend with an overbearing best friend, the geriatric cast of a high-maintenance drama production, her first boyfriend, and a town full of eccentric neighbors – not to mention a dark secret she’s been keeping about why the ex-football coach left town.

“Fifield succeeds in delivering a cast of quirky, unpredictable characters and an intriguing plot,” writes *Kirkus*, and author Susan Crandall praises the book as “a jewel among novels, both darkly humorous and deeply revealing.”

Fifield earned his MFA from Sarah Lawrence College in upstate New York. For the past 20 years he has worked as a social worker for adults with intellectual disabilities, while volunteering as a creative writing teacher in Missoula. His debut, *The Flood Girls*, was published in 2016.



Poetry

The River Where You Forgot My Name

By Corrie Williamson

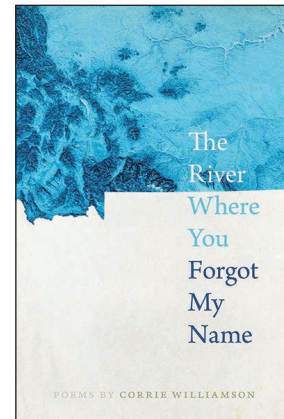
In her second collection, poet Corrie Williamson travels between early 1800s Virginia and Missouri and present-day western Montana, a place where “bats sail the river of dark.”

Three of the book’s five sections trace Williamson’s experiences while living for five years in western Montana. The remaining two are persona poems written in the voice of Julia Hancock Clark, wife of William Clark, who she married soon after he returned from his western expedition with Meriwether Lewis. Julia offers a foil for the poet’s first-person Montana narrative and enriches the historical perspective of the poetry, providing a female voice to counterbalance the often male-centered discovery and frontier narrative.

The collection shines with all-too human moments of levity, tragedy, and beauty such as when Clark names a river Judith after his future wife, not knowing that everyone calls her Julia. At the same time, Williamson turns a curious and critical eye on the motives and impact of expansionism, unpacking some of the darker ramifications of American hunger for land and resources.

“We sit within a small circle of light and listen to Williamson’s unhurried voice as it tells us, ‘Hush now, all/ will be revealed,’ which is how we must dwell on this earth, too – with patience and a sense of time’s great arc and return. I’m grateful for the echoing music made in the space between present and past,” writes Keetje Kuipers, author of *All Its Charms*.

The author has taught writing at the University of Arkansas, Helena College and Carroll College and worked as an educator in Yellowstone National Park. *The River Where You Forgot My Name* was a Montana Book Award Honor Book in 2019, and her first book, *Sweet Husk*, won the 2014 Perugia Press Prize.



The Man Himself

By Al Nyhart

Years ago, when he was a teaching assistant at the University of Montana, poet Al Nyhart picked up a textbook on writing to use in the English comp class he was teaching.

“Reading through it one day I came across a line that said ‘style was the man himself.’ I thought that if I’d write a book someday that would be the title of it. So, I think it all fits. That’s what these poems are about – man wanting to ‘fashion a world.’”

His book, *The Man Himself* (published October 2019 by Main Street Rag Publishing Company), was nearly 30 years in the making. Some are narratives, drawn from childhood and experiences stuck in his psyche; others were crafted during graduate school – he earned an MFA from the University of Montana in 1994 – and have been worked and reworked over the years; and more recent ones were influenced by what he was reading, a list that ranges from Stephen Hawking to Wallace Stevens.

The resulting poems, writes David Keplinger, author of *Another City*, “cut and scrape against the lining of the heart, with poems that mark the behaviors of ‘the only animal who refuses to be what he is.’ All the while, and with gorgeous clarity and tenderness, the work arrows toward freedom. Though they have traveled great distances, the poems land with impeccable timing and musical control. Here you will find, in Nyhart’s words, ‘the way back as becoming.’”

The author, who lives in White Sulphur Springs, has been a painting contractor for more than 40 years. His poetry has appeared in many publications, including *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Big Sky Journal*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Great River Review*, *William and Mary Review*, and elsewhere.

Sweetclover

By Shann Ray

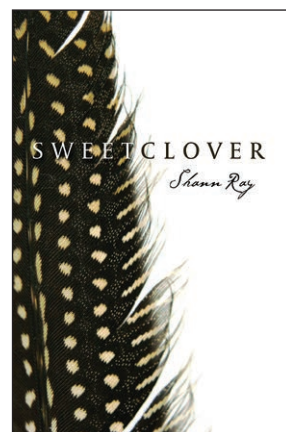
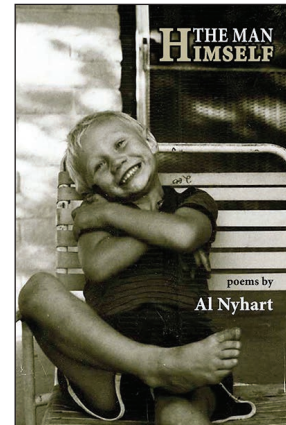
Grounded in the physical while asking metaphysical questions, the poems in *Sweetclover* detail love, wilderness, fracture and union. They speak of wildflowers, the slant of a collarbone, the flight feathers of predatory birds, and the eye of winter.

American Book Award-winner Shann Ray’s affinity for Montana landscapes and the intimate heart of the beloved burn like a hearth. His collection of poems honors marriage through individual and collective interpretations of the body in movement – silent, vocal, ethereal, muscular and transcendent.

The fellow travelers in these poems cross mountain ranges to behold the intricacy of blue-capped tree swallows, scale the Beartooths to find the bones of an eagle, exult in mercy, forgiveness, “the arrowleaf tilt of your torso.”

“Shann Ray’s *Sweetclover* is a book steeped in desire, a book of body and spirit. It strikes me, savoring these fine, wise poems, that love and religion share a vocabulary: ecstasy, rapture, devotion, faithfulness,” writes Maggie Smith, author of *Good Bones*. “In *Sweetclover*, married love is nothing less than holy.”

Ray, who grew up in Montana and spent part of his childhood on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, lives in Spokane where he teaches leadership and forgiveness studies at Gonzaga University. He’s written seven books, including three collections of poetry.



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Author seeks illustrator for children’s book

Janice Cohn, the author of *The Christmas Menorahs: How A Town Fought Hate*, is seeking a Montana artist to create new illustrations for a reprinting of this award-winning children’s book. It tells the true story of how Billings residents fought anti-Semitism during the holiday season of 1993.

The preferred style is “a la Norman Rockwell’s artistic realism,” says the author. “This is a great opportunity to build your portfolio illustrating an important, inspiring chapter in Montana’s history.” The artist will be paid; call 973-509-8089 for details or email drjanicecohn@aol.com.



Two Montana museums host Art in Bloom

Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art in Great Falls and the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings each plan to host Art in Bloom this summer. Art in Bloom is a nationwide festival of fine art and floral design held at museums across the country that originated at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston in 1976.

Art in Bloom: Spring Awakening! is slated for June 4-7 at Paris Gibson Square. Floral designers and garden club members plan to create imaginative displays interpreting works of art in the galleries. Each day will include a special program, including workshops, lectures, a cocktail party, champagne brunch, family activities, and daily docent tours.

The museum is now accepting applications from professional florists and designers to create floral arrangements in response to contemporary works of art in the museum's collection and spring exhibitions. For details, visit www.the-square.org/art-in-bloom-2020.

The Yellowstone Art Museum's inaugural event is set for July 9-12. For more information, visit www.artmuseum.org/special-events/art-in-bloom-2020.

Preservation Road Show heads to White Sulphur Springs

The Montana Preservation Alliance (MPA) in partnership with the USDA Forest Service Region 1 brings the next Montana Preservation Road Show to White Sulphur Springs June 10-13. This preservation conference highlights the history of Meagher County and central Montana.

The Road Show launches from a different small town every other year with the mission of immersing participants in the history and culture of rural Montana, spotlighting local preservation efforts, and raising awareness of the importance of preserving Montana's historic buildings and cultural landscapes.

In White Sulphur, the conference will spotlight lesser known landmarks and local preservation stories, including the Castle Museum, the Bair Family Museum and local ghost towns. A cadre of recognized historians, authors, professors and rural preservation experts will also explore the history of landmark local families like the Ringlings, Gordons and Doigs.

During the conference, the MPA will dedicate a special evening to celebrate the people and organizations that help protect vital and endangered heritage sites. The board and staff will help present the Montana Preservation Awards to outstanding preservation efforts from across the state.

Participants don't have to be an historian or professional preservationist to join this



A parberry crown – one of the hidden treasures visitors to White Sulphur Springs will discover during the Montana Preservation Road Show.

conference – just an enthusiastic traveler, listener and lover of history.

"White Sulphur is a town that we just fell in love with," said Outreach Coordinator Madeline Westrom. "MPA began work there a few years ago to help survey the potential of historic buildings in downtown and our staff knew early on that it was an excellent candidate for hosting the Road Show.

"With rich culture, a strong community, and easy access to a number of major historical sites, it is going to be tough for folks to decide which all-day and half-day tours they want to take."

For those who can't attend the full conference, a one-day registration option is available for tours on Saturday.

Road Show Highlights

- Opening reception on the Castle Museum lawn in downtown White Sulphur Springs.
- Explore the history of Central Montana with stops at the Bair Museum, Harlowton and surrounding ghost towns.
- See Meagher County through the eyes of the famous Ringling Circus family.
- Delve into the history of White Sulphur's many industries and the Jawbone Railroad.
- Journey the historic Old Kings Hill Highway into the Belt Mountains with local and regional experts.

- Discuss the challenges facing small communities.
- Look behind the scenes at some of White Sulphur's most beloved historic buildings during the all-access walking tour.
- Choose a Saturday tour or workshop to hone preservation skills or see the barns of Meagher County.

To get the latest information, updates, and registration information about the Road Show, visit www.preservemontana.org/2020-road-show or follow Montana Preservation Alliance on Facebook.

Cohesion Dance Project stages "Resonance"

Cohesion Dance Project (CDP) presents a new version of "Resonance – an evening of Art Inspiring Art" at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 15, at the Helena Civic Center.

With dance and sculpture at its core, "Resonance – Evolved" is an artistic confluence of sculpture and performance. The production features professional and local community dancers weaving seamlessly in and out of three original kinetic sculptures by Helena artist Richard Swanson, accompanied by spoken-word poetry and live, original music.

The new production stems from Cohesion's original production, which debuted in 2018 at The Myrna Loy in Helena and toured around the state in 2019.

Cohesion's artistic director, Tanya Call, emphasizes how instrumental Swanson's sculptures are to the core of this project. "While each artistic contribution is based on one of the other art compositions created for the project, there really would be no



Dancers join Richard Swanson with one of the sculptures he designed and fabricated for "Resonance – an Evening of Art Inspiring Art."

Resonance without the metal sculptures he designed and fabricated specifically for this production," she notes.

In addition to Swanson's sculpture, other pioneering contributions include spoken-word poetry by award-winning poet Tyler Knott Gregson, and an original music score by professional percussionist and accompanist J

Stuart Smith of Albuquerque, NM.

New contributions come from an array of local talent, including Sean Hill (poetry), Lenny Eckhardt and Jon Anderson (music), Katie White Swanson (viola), and others.

Call and other Cohesion choreographers Amber Moon Peterson and Julynn Wildman have created new pieces for a cast of more than 20 local professional and community dancers, ages 12 through adult.

In addition to this unique performance, Cohesion facilitates the ripple effect of creative energy and cyclical inspirations with Resonance-inspired school arts residencies. Cohesion leads students through a multi-genre artistic creative process, providing tools to create in a variety of media and experience first-hand the cycle of art inspiring art. For details, visit cohesion-dance.org.

Arts interview program available online

"Look Before You Speak," an arts interview program on Missoula Community Access Television (MCAT) hosted by Stephen Glueckert, is now available online via YouTube. The series, which ran from 2016-'19, took a different interview approach each season, starting with professional scholars who were writing about the arts, then interviewing gallery and museum curators, and eventually visiting with artists in their studios. Many of the artists were at different stages in their careers, but each guest was serious in the pursuit of a consistent body of work.

Each guest was encouraged to bring in, or talk about, up to a half-dozen images. While traditional television maintains an image on the screen for no more than two seconds, the series kept a still on the screen for much longer – sometimes up to two minutes – while it was being described.

"Some viewers might feel this is boring," says MCAT general manager Joel Baird. "But there is an underlying educational aspect of



Stephen Glueckert interviews Kate Davis during "Look Before You Speak," an interview program now available via YouTube.

the program. The visual arts demand that we make careful consideration of the image we have before us, set aside rash judgments and slow down to describe and identify what it is we are looking at before we make a judgment about what it is we are seeing."

"In Montana we can often be lulled into a sense that the real arts are on the east and west coasts of the United States. Nothing could be further from the truth," Baird writes.

The series "attempted to reach an audience who does not normally visit studios and galleries and dispel this myth."

Glueckert and his guests also sought to increase visual literacy while showcasing the vitality of the arts in Missoula.

Glueckert, a prolific artist and Curator Emeritus for the Missoula Art Museum, is a Montana native who received a BFA from the University of Idaho and a master's in art education from Western Washington University. He has taught at The University of Montana, the University of Papua New Guinea, and throughout the Pacific Northwest. In addition to being a practicing artist, he has written extensively about contemporary artists living and working in Montana.

These interviews were funded in part by a grant from the Montana Arts Council's Cultural and Aesthetics Projects grant program. The collection is available online at www.youtube.com/channel/UCybr55Hp_wx-woe5pNJCz6Nw.

ABOUT VISUAL ARTISTS

Betsey Hurd: Where the Wild Things Are Through May 15 at Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art, Great Falls Artist's Website: betseyhurd.com

Montana artist Betsey Hurd is interested in the secret life of animals, wild as well as domesticated – including the dogs and horses that she lives with and observes daily. She reflects upon their relationships and interactions with each other, their hierarchies, fears and loves.

The contemporary artist is known for her sculptural ceramic work, as well as her paintings of horses. The work she creates rarely depicts humans. Instead, it reflects her fascination with the inner life of animals. When humans do appear, they are typically combined with animal forms in a style Hurd describes as “polymorphic fabulism.” These sculptures are meant to be non-specific in species and remain gender fluid.

“All my life, I’ve been a horsey girl and have gotten to do just about everything on horseback, from foxhunting in Virginia to trailing cows in the Missouri Breaks of Montana; showing jumpers to starting colts,” she writes.

“As a painter and sculptor my strength comes from depicting what I know: horses and cows, sheep, dogs – all the four-leggeds that I live with, and observe, daily.”

She notes that cows and sheep, with their blocky forms and tendency to “lie around a lot,” lend themselves to abstraction; horses, on the other hand, carry weight and power “on perilously thin legs, balanced and beautiful, stalwart and frisky. It’s hard to better an honest horse.”

Hurd received her BFA, cum laude, from the University of Montana in Missoula in 1984, with concentrations in ceramics and drawing, and has made a living as an artist for more than 30 years. Her artwork is exhibited and acquired by collectors throughout the United States.

Connie Herberg: Wild Montana Skies Continuing through June 28 at the Carbon County Arts Guild Satellite Gallery at the Roosevelt Center in Red Lodge Artist's website: www.connieherbergfineart.com

Artist Connie Herberg masterfully evokes dynamic moments in the sky in this collection of large-scale oil paintings.

The artist attended both North Dakota State University in Fargo and Eastern Montana College (now MSU Billings), where she earned a bachelor's of fine art degree. She's since honed her skills via an amalgamation of workshops, peer influences, self-study, practice and passion. Herberg maintains a studio at her home in Shepherd, where she paints and occasionally teaches.

Nature is both classroom and the source of her inspiration as she gathers subject matter while hunting, fishing and camping. Herberg places a strong emphasis on drafting skills and observation from life, and believes that developing an understanding of the subject and mastering the translation from observation to an art form is the key to a successful work.

Growing up as the oldest of four in a farming family in northwest North Dakota, she was strongly influenced by her mother and maternal grandmother in creative pursuits. The landscape remains an integral part of her life and an overarching theme in her work.

Her paintings have been included in many local, regional and national shows and competitions, and were featured in a Northlight publication on drawing. Her work has been purchased by the Department of the Interior, Stockman Bank and the Richland County Museum, and is included in business, corporate and personal collections nationally.

Stephen Braun: Hindsight and Foresight Are 20/20 Continuing through Aug. 8 at the Missoula Art Museum

In a corner of northwest Montana, deep in the woods, Stephen Braun is making powerful, challenging ceramic sculptures. “I love the planet and all of its beauty. But all I see is loss. I see the scars we leave to support our consumptive nature. We leave a landscape of heartache.”

Self-deprecating and evasive, Braun would rather focus on his artwork than himself as an artist, or his history of activism.

His exhibit at the Missoula Art Museum includes large, narrative wall-based and free-standing sculptures, some of which encourage audience interaction, including pieces that spin and works intended to be walked directly upon, around or through.

Braun comes from a long history of radical artists. As an anthropol-



“The Good Red Road,” by Betsey Hurd



“A Montana Legacy,” by Stephen Braun

ogy student at the University of Montana, he was introduced to ceramics and studied with ceramics pioneer Rudy Autio, conceptual artist Dennis Voss and sculptor Ken Little. As a student, he lived up Grant Creek in a tipi for four-and-a-half years, despite recorded temperatures as low as -50°F, biking 13 miles to his site, and scavenging food out of dumpsters.

“I tried to figure out the minimal level of consumption I needed in order to live and after doing this I determined everything else I consume is in excess,” he says.

This commitment impacts his studio practice, in particular. Braun explains, “Art materials are linked to extractive industries and filled with heavy chemicals. I’m judicious in what I make. It’s a moral and ethical question, a conundrum. Hopefully the content, the impact, of my work will supersede the resources that go into making it.”

Spanning more than 30 years, Braun’s career comprises solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally, and broad representation in public and private collections. This exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated catalog with essays by artist and writer Peter Koch, critic Lucy Lippard, and MAM senior curator Brandon Reintjes.

Marion Lavery: 20/20 Vision May 1-June 3 at 4 Ravens Gallery in Missoula

Missoula artist Marion Lavery says the visual world informed and inspired her artistic development, beginning with high school classes at the Philadelphia Institute of Art, followed by earning a bachelor’s in applied art from Pennsylvania State University.

She furthered her academic interests with graduate-level classes in painting, art history and ceramics at the University of Minnesota in Duluth, Western New Mexico University in Silver City, and the University of Montana in Missoula.

She has worked as a graphic artist and prop designer, professional potter, bookbinder, and studio artist.

“My primary focus in recent years has been acrylic collage, print-making and artist’s books,” she says. Her works on display at 4 Ravens employ cold wax and oil paints.

Her work has appeared in group shows and invitational exhibits at 4 Ravens Gallery, Sutton West Gallery and the Missoula Art Museum in Missoula, the Holter Gallery in Helena, the Runnings Gallery in Seattle, and at the Philadelphia Country Club in Lower Merion, PA.



“20/20 Vision” by Marion Lavery

Neltje: Tell Me, Why Flowers? March 26-July 12 at the Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings Artist's website: neltje.com

Neltje’s paintings, like the artist, are intense, complex and larger than life. The well-known contemporary artist is prolific and focused, working through each series until she feels it is complete. This exhibition features two series, which she painted between 2016 and 2018.

In her late 30s, Neltje began her excursion into the discipline of Sumi-e painting. That practice became the core of her later work. She often starts a painting with a gesture of bold color and works in a counterclockwise pattern, alternating between quick, expressive physical movements and intense deliberation. Colors sing like musical notes.

Neltje finds a source of energy as well as solace in nature’s beauty. “Tell Me, Why Flowers?” is composed of lyrical abstractions linked like a musical “theme and variations.” A painting of the same title, at 10-by-30 feet, fills a gallery wall. This and four other monumental paintings represent the four seasons, and reflect the life and abundance the artist feels in the presence of nature.

“Dialogue of My Mind,” also on display, is Neltje’s first figurative series, made in response to the 2016 elections. Her series of expressive faces imagines people affected by the rapidly changing political landscape: shocked, fragmented and disconnected.

Neltje has had numerous group and solo exhibitions, and received the Wyoming Governor’s Art Award in 2005. She is based out of Banner, WY, near Sheridan.



“Tell Me, Why Flowers?” by Neltje



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Send your submissions for About Visual Arts

With About Visual Arts, *State of the Arts* continues to profile living Montana artists (no students, please), whose work is the focus of a current exhibit in Montana (on display during some portion of the three months covered by the current issue of *State of the Arts*).

Submissions must include:

- A digital image of the artist’s work, with title of the piece (at least 200 dpi and 500kb);
- A brief bio and description of the artist’s work;
- Date range and title of exhibit; and
- The gallery or museum name, town and phone number.

MAC will select submissions that reflect a cross-section of gender, geography, styles and ethnicity, and are from a mix of public and private galleries and museums.

Submissions for the Summer issue (July-September, 2020) are due June 5; send ingredients to Kristi@livelytimes.com with About Visual Arts in the subject line.

A Cautionary Note: Many galleries and museums are closed well into April due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and are shuffling exhibition schedules accordingly. Our advice: check with the venue before venturing forth.

ARTS EDUCATION

Students deliver powerful poetry at POL state finals

By Tom Kuglin

Reprinted with permission from the *Helena Independent Record* (helenair.com), March 9

For someone with a fear of public speaking, center stage of Grandstreet Theatre in Helena might have been the loneliest microphone in the state of Montana. But for 16 high school students, it was their chance to bring poetry alive.

The 2020 Poetry Out Loud Montana State Finals, held March 7, featured students memorizing and reciting classics to contemporary works in an event that is part competition and part art. Now in its 15th year, students must compete at school and regional events before coming to the Montana finals with the chance to go to Washington, D.C., next month for the national competition.

Flathead High School sophomore Isabella Shinn stepped to the microphone. After a deep breath, she delivered an emotional and thoughtful rendition of “For the Dogs Who Barked at Me on the Sidewalks in Connecticut” by Hanif Abdurraqib that earned her the applause of the crowd and title of state champion.

“I think I just saw the (poem’s) title and that interested me,” she said in an interview. “Then I read it and it was powerful and really makes you think about it.”

Shinn competed in Poetry Out Loud last year as well and says she enjoys the travel, meeting new people and reciting the poetry. Of course the experience of getting up in front of a crowd and delivering the words from memory is not easy.

“It’s scary – I was so nervous last year. This year I wasn’t as much but whenever you stand on stage you start shaking,” she said, adding that going to nationals comes with its own level of nerves.

Shinn was just one of many students bringing stellar recitations to the state finals.

Butte High junior Katy McCumber’s rendition of “When You are Old” by William Butler Yeats earned her second-place accolades, and Belt High School senior Adelle Meissner received the third-place nod from the judges for her delivery of “Broken Promises” by David Kirby.

Montana Poetry Out Loud is offered to students through a partnership between the



The top three finalists at 2020 Montana Poetry Out Loud State Finals, held March 7 in Helena, are (left to right): Adelle Meissner, Belt High School (third place); Isabella Shinn, Flathead High School (first place); and Katy McCumber, Butte High School (second place).



Flathead High School sophomore Isabella Shinn cinched top honors with her rendition of “For the Dogs Who Barked at Me on the Sidewalks in Connecticut.”

(Photos by Katie Knight)

National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation with the Montana Arts Council. The program helps students master public speaking skills, appreciate poetry and earn awards and cash prizes. For her win, Shinn receives \$200, an all-expense-paid trip to nationals (which has been canceled due to

COVID-19) and a \$500 stipend for her school to buy poetry materials.

Monica Grable, the council’s arts education director, noted that the former chairman of the NEA, Dana Gioia, saw the need to keep poetry alive in schools and became a driving force behind Poetry Out Loud. Every state in the country sends one champion to the finals, which includes a free trip with a parent or guardian.

Even while the event crowned a champion, organizers emphasized the difficulty and subjectivity that comes with judging anything artistic.

“I have to say, that what you tackled today is one of the more difficult art forms, much like a dancer translates a choreographer’s work, or an actor a playwright’s, you had to dig into the poet’s words, thoughts and feelings and interpret them for the rest of us to connect,” said Tatiana Gant, executive director of the council.

“Those words are in you forever,” she continued. “You accomplished an amazing thing by inspiring people all along the way, in your classroom contests, in your school contests, at the regionals, and thank you for letting us be a part of that.”

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Artists in Schools & Communities

MAC’s Artists in Schools and Communities (AISC) grant program has maintained a tradition of helping to pair professional artists with learners of all ages for nearly five decades. Under the current program iteration there are three subcategories: Grants \$1,500-\$5,000, Arts Learning Partners and Grants Under \$1,500. The latter serves as an entrée into grant writing for many Montana applicants and offers grantees an opportunity to gain first-hand experience with what an AISC grant can accomplish.

Supported by State of Montana and National Endowment for the Arts funds, AISC grants are awarded with a 1:1 match requirement; first-time grantees and Class C (or smaller) schools, however, need only to meet a 2:1 match. This means that for a project with an expense budget of \$1,800, the AISC award would cover \$1,200 of the project expense, with just a \$600 match required.

Matching funds may not include other federal funds, but may partially include fees paid by participants.

For more information contact Monica Grable, 406-444-6522 or Monica.Grable@mt.gov.

AISC Grants Under \$1,500
Upcoming FY21 Due Dates:
May 4, 2020 at 5 p.m.
Nov 4, 2020 at 5 p.m.

Artists in Schools and Communities

Carbon County Arts Guild addresses community need

By Monica Grable
 Arts Education Director

This past fall, first-time applicant Carbon County Arts Guild in Red Lodge used an Artists in Schools and Communities grant in the Under \$1,500 category as a way to address a community need. A reorganization of the art program in the Red Lodge School District – shifting instruction to a grade 4-12 model – meant that teachers in grades K-3 (not all of whom felt confident teaching art) would need to provide for their classroom-based art instruction.

Carbon County Arts Guild recognized the need for these teachers and students to be supported and, through a partnership with Mountain View Elementary, was able to send teaching artist Dominique Paulus into classrooms for a two-week residency. While

the AISC grant they were awarded did not cover the entirety of the project, it did make the project possible.

During the residency, Paulus was able to introduce the basic elements of art, such as line, shape, color, value and texture, to each grade level. Further, she shared the history of the process, appreciation of the natural world and science disciplines, all while emphasizing artmaking as a way for students to express their individuality. While students were learn-



With the guidance of teaching artist Dominique Paulus, third grade students learned the basics of one-point perspective and applied the concept to their own work.

ing, teachers were able to gain confidence in their own ability to lead art instruction in their classrooms.

In the words of Carbon County Arts Guild Executive Director Kim Kapalka, “From the perspective of the Arts Guild, the highlights of this grant project included being able to provide an art opportunity for K-3 students, hire an artist whose passion for the arts and science was contagious, and be able to pro-



Second grade students created life-size birds after learning about migration and bird habitat. (Photos by Kim Kapalka)

vide a way to engage classroom teachers in the arts.”

Over the course of the two-week residency, 126 students and eight teachers benefitted from Paulus’s residency, and – given the response from students, staff, administration and the Carbon County Arts Guild itself – the partnership is likely to continue into the next school year.

ARTS EDUCATION

MAM launches remote access platform for students

Last spring, the education team at the Missoula Art Museum (MAM) began a partnership with Inspired Classroom, a Missoula-based education tech company, to build an interactive, online platform aimed at providing schools outside of western Montana with a live tour and educational experience at the museum.

MAM successfully piloted this program with two classrooms from St. Ignatius Elementary School and has integrated it as an extension of MAM's Fifth Grade Art Experience (FGAE). FGAE, which includes a tour of MAM and artmaking, runs annually from October to January and has served more than 1,500 fifth grade students from five counties so far this year.

This new program, called Museum as Megaphone, launched on Feb. 10, 2020, with seven schools from across the state participating: Daly Elementary (Hamilton), Judith Gap, Frazer School (Fort Peck), Kinsey Elementary, Moore School, Noxon Elementary and St. Charles Mission School (Crow Agency). In all, 152 students participated in the program's launch.

In a state where geography, weather and economic factors are obstacles to visiting MAM, Museum as Megaphone allows students and teachers from anywhere to virtually tour the galleries. Using the distance learning platform and technological expertise of Inspired Classroom, students log in from their classroom and interact directly with exhibiting artists and art educators. Each session includes an interactive exhibition tour, a curriculum for self-guided, hands-on artmaking, and videos and resources for teachers.

Any classroom equipped with an Internet connection and a computer with a camera and microphone can engage in Museum as Megaphone; participation is free.

Pilot season focuses on Indigenous artists

The pilot season of Museum as Megaphone will focus on the art of Indigenous artists Rick Bartow (Mad River Band Wiyot) and Lillian Pitt (Wasco, Warm Springs, Yakama). This focus is rooted in the museum's commitment to exhibiting contemporary Native American artists and providing access to rural and tribal communities.

Opportunity for Educators

Harvard hosts Arts and Passion-Driven Learning Institute

The Arts and Passion-Driven Learning Institute (APL), held Aug. 3-5 at Harvard University in Cambridge, MA, explores the importance of awakening and developing students' personal passions, and how those passions are vital to deep and meaningful learning.

In a rapidly evolving 21st century, educators need tools and resources to tap into students' creativity and connect with them individually and in culturally competent ways. APL provides professional development for K-12 educators to connect students' passions to meaningful learning by drawing upon the efficacy and power of arts experiences to engage students across academic subjects and in a variety of school settings.

APL features faculty from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, artists from the Grammy-winning Silkroad Ensemble, and seasoned educators from the U.S. and abroad.

The three-day immersive experience includes workshops, performances, plenaries, small group discussions and an appearance by cellist and Silkroad founder Yo-Yo Ma.

Participation in this extraordinary professional development opportunity offers educators the chance to reflect on five primary and important themes related to their work: curiosity, cultural competency, inspiration, community and visibility.

Susan Wolfe, a visual arts educator at Lame Deer Junior/Senior High School, offers this perspective on attending the APL Institute: "Every year the Arts and Passion-Driven Learning Institute has encouraged me to further challenge my experiences as an educator and practicing visual artist. In the process I have learned how to identify my own inherent gifts and utilize them to create a deeper connection with the young people in my classroom."



Jenny Bevil, MAM's Educator and Outreach Specialist, leads students in an inquiry-based discussion during the Museum as Megaphone launch event.

By 2022 MAM hopes to have schools participating from all seven American Indian reservations in the state. "This access and engagement with contemporary art and artists serves the education and well-being of all Montana youth," said Kay Grissom-Kiely, curator of education at MAM. She notes that the program meets several Montana State Content Standards for educational curricula.

During the Museum as Megaphone LIVE DAY at MAM, students and teachers were virtually placed in the museum's largest gallery, looking directly at Rick Bartow's artwork, while MAM's art educators led students on an inquiry-based tour.

"Students were energized and engaged in dialogue and discussion about a prominent contemporary American Indian artist on display hundreds of miles from their school," says Grissom-Kiely. "This virtual portal, created in partnership with Inspired Classroom, expands MAM's reach and amplifies the voices of rural and tribal students across the state."

Following the LIVE DAY, students had two weeks to complete their own expressive paintings in their classrooms. Students watched the Museum as Megaphone videos and followed instructions in order to express themselves through paint in their classrooms without an art teacher present.

"I'm starting to go through the modules and am really excited to bring this to my students. The platform is very user friendly."

— Teresa Heil, Frazer School, Fort Peck

In an effort to build community around Museum as Megaphone, MAM created an artwork-sharing plan that enabled all participants to see the art that the other classes created.

After students completed their expressive paintings, teachers were invited to share their students' artwork, and process photos and reflections on their class or school social media, using the hashtag #museumasmegaphone. MAM then asked permission to repost to its

social media and website. Sharing in this way offered a remarkable opportunity for teachers from throughout the state, and beyond, to see everyone's student artwork.

"MAM recognizes that everyone's work is personal and abstract, so this makes judgments like good or bad irrelevant," says Grissom-Kiely. "At MAM, self-expression is the goal, whatever that looks like. If colors are being mixed and brushstrokes are applying the paint to paper expressively, then the artwork is a success."

Museum as Megaphone amplifies student voices, expands outreach

The primary benefits for students engaged with Museum as Megaphone are the connections created with contemporary visual art and artists – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – a widened vision of the world and what is possible, and the amplification of their voices. For teachers, the program provides enrichment and professional development while providing access to the museum – something that would otherwise be unavailable to schools. Museum as Megaphone also meets Montana Standards in Art, IEFA and Social Studies while building 21st Century Skills.

For MAM, Museum as Megaphone is an opportunity to expand outreach to rural and tribal schools, improve access for all to exhibiting artists as well as to the MAM's collection, and build support for MAM's vision of museums as democratic places where all people are welcome to interact.

To learn more about the Museum as Megaphone, contact Kay Grissom-Kiely at 406-728-0447 or kay@missoulaartmuseum.org.

Who should attend?

- K-12 classroom teachers, arts specialists, artists who teach, school administrators, and counselors.
- Teams of teachers/artists and administrators from the same school, district or organization.
- Teaching artists in youth development programs and after school programs.
- Educators working in culturally vibrant urban, rural, and indigenous communities.

Early application, in advance of the priority deadline of June 22, is strongly recommended as applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. The final application deadline is July 6.

For more information and to apply, visit: www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe/program/arts-and-passion-driven-learning-institute.



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Online teaching resources for arts educators

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Arts Education Partnership (www.aep-arts.org/covid-19-resources) is posting resources that aim to help schools, arts educators and teaching artists shift operations to online platforms for telework situations, serve their constituents in new ways and care for their employees.

Among the offerings:

- A link to a Facebook blog for Theatre Educators Teaching Online;
- The online collection of the Carnegie Museum of Art, collection.cmoa.org
- The Kennedy Center's theatre, music, and dance resources for arts educators: www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/
- Music resources for kids from the Music Teachers National Association: www.mtna.org/MTNA/Learn/Parent_and_Student_Resources/Websites_for_Kids.aspx

The Arts Ed Collaborative, artsedcollab.org, is another helpful resource.

FILM CLIPS NEWS ABOUT FILM IN MONTANA



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Making a Montana Bridge Infamous A look back at “The Untouchables”

By Allison Whitmer
Montana Film
Commissioner

The gangster thriller, “The Untouchables,” turned a central-Montana bridge into a star when director Brian De Palma continued his run of action films that began with “Scarface” and “Wise Guys.”

Based on real events in 1930s Chicago, the film centers around the illegal activities of Al Capone, who regularly and publicly flaunts attempts by the Bureau of Prohibition to shut down his liquor supply and distribution activities. In the end, tax evasion is his downfall.

The production researched and filmed in historic Chicago locations, and then began reaching out to find a location for a pivotal scene at the U.S./Canadian border.

By 1986 the Montana Film Office had been in existence for 12 years, and in that time had hosted “Thunderbolt and Lightfoot” with Clint Eastwood and Jeff Bridges, and “Telefon” with Charles Bronson in the Great Falls area. Production companies were using Montana on a regular basis.

Paramount Pictures worked with Garry Wunderwald, head of the film office at the time, to scout for a 1930s era bridge to serve as the U.S./Canada border crossing for a confrontation in the film as Eliot Ness, played by Kevin Costner, intercepts illegal booze shipments from Canada and begins to crack the crime organization.

Wunderwald had some tough requirements. The bridge had to be closed to traffic. It needed to have distinct looks on both sides



The Untouchables in Montana: On the horses from left to right are Andy Garcia, Sean Connery, Charles Martin Smith and Kevin Costner.

(Photo by Rick Moore)

to imply the border crossing and had to be realistic to the 1930s. It also had to be low enough to the river for safe stunt work.

After scouting several bridges that were too high, under construction, or had too much traffic, the production settled on the Hardy Creek Bridge, located on the frontage road between Cascade and Wolf Creek. Constructed in 1930, this Warren-through-truss, three-span bridge became the star of the moment. The bridge sits in the spectacular Adel Mountains Volcanic Field, which is more than 75 million years old.

The production team arrived in October 1986 and transformed the area for 10 days. To make the bridge look more isolated, 600 trees were planted, and houses were covered in 50,000 square feet of camouflage netting and canvas. Locals were cast as Canadian Mounties, Model T’s were rented from nearby farmers and ranchers, trains were rerouted, and the public had a front seat to watch the action live.

Wunderwald estimated that the production spent close to \$1 million in the area as they prepped and filmed at the bridge. The film premiered on June 3, 1987.

The *New York Times* gave the film a positive review, calling it “a smashing work” and saying it was “vulgar, violent, funny and sometimes breathtakingly beautiful.”

One of the production crew was Great Falls resident Rick Moore. He sent us several photos from the shoot for this article.

Moore had worked on Miller beer commercials in Denton, and through referrals started working craft service on the film.

“During production Sean Connery told me he loved fruit, and I bought him fruit every day,” he recalls. Connery went on to receive the Academy Award for “Best Supporting Actor” for his role in “The Untouchables.”

TIME magazine rated it as one of the best films of 1987.

And “The Untouchables” producer Art Linson’s son, John Linson, and Kevin Costner are now back in Montana filming the TV series “Yellowstone,” which just got picked up for a third season.

As for the Hardy Creek Bridge, it’s now on the National Register of Historic Places. We encourage you to watch the film and then take a Sunday drive out to the Hardy Bridge!

Learn more about films made in Montana, incentives, crew and locations online at montanafilm.com and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Bigfork Independent Film Festival postponed until October

The fourth annual Bigfork Independent Film Festival (BIFF 2020), scheduled to take place April 3-5, has been postponed until Oct. 2-4 due to concerns surrounding Coronavirus.

Organizers, who were expecting filmmakers from across the state to attend, decided to postpone the festival “in an abundance of caution and to protect the health of the local community.”

Learn more about the festival, held at the Bigfork Center for the Performing Arts, at mtbiff.com.



Rick Moore took the photo above and many more while working on the filming set for “The Untouchables” at the Hardy Creek Bridge.

International Wildlife Film Festival embraces digital festival experience

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the 43rd International Wildlife Film Festival, typically held at the Roxy Theater in Missoula, will go digital April 18-25. The IWFF LABS, described as an incubator for science filmmaking, has been postponed.

IWFF organizers aim to create “a virtual festival experience that will honor films, sponsors, guests and educators, and exemplify the way media can be utilized in a new reality.” As usual, the film competition will be juried.

The public may buy passes and tickets to films and live streaming events at wildlifefilms.org. Organizers hope to attract “people across the nation who will crave this kind of interactive content come mid-April.”

MONTANA POETS LAUREATE

What Does Calm Say

Spring snow comes softly into the tiny mountain town, from the canyons, which have already turned opaque. A church bell is ringing, anachronistically. No suicide bombs, no gang rape, no nuclear winter, no drone strikes, no polar extinctions. Just a village buried in inconsequence. As if it were a dream we can’t re-enter. In the beginning, the authors say, the world was black and white, before the clay wrapped itself around itself, forming an inside and outside. Hole in the bedrock where the water breaks. Dear Sister Outsider. Our Lady Underground. Atmosphere, a ripped frock the shade of swans. We know the soul can become unbalanced, out of tune like a guitar, that snakes and rats will leave their holes when they sense disturbance in earth’s core. What does calm say, sinking into its dark-skinned ditch? What does peace say, in the continuous line-making of its horizons? What does oil say, the figure we have chosen for our voice?

– Melissa Kwasny, from *Pictograph* (Milkweed Editions 2015)



Melissa Kwasny and M.L. Smoker (Photo by Barbara Weissberger)

As co-poets laureate and women from marginalized communities, Montana Poets Laureate – Melissa Kwasny and M.L. Smoker – aim to celebrate poetry as an art that fosters connection, relationships and bridge building. *State of the Arts* will feature their poems on an alternating basis during their two-year term.

NATIONAL ARTS NEWS

Nine Montana organizations receive NEA grants

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Mary Anne Carter announced recently that organizations in every state in the nation, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, will receive federal funding for arts projects from the NEA in this round of fiscal year 2020 funding.

Overall, 1,187 grants totaling \$27.3 million will provide Americans opportunities for arts participation, including nine grants to Montana organizations, amounting to \$175,000.

“The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support grants throughout the entire country that connect people through shared experiences and artistic expression,” says Carter. “These projects provide access to the arts for people of all abilities and backgrounds in both urban centers and rural communities.”

The Art Works and Challenge America grants awarded to Montana are:

- **Billings Symphony Orchestra & Choir:** \$10,000 to support a concert performance of “West Side Story,” and related outreach activities.



Mountain Time Arts' production of *Standby Snow: Chronicles of a Heatwave, Chapter One*, debuted last summer in Bozeman.

• **Mountain Time Arts, Bozeman:** \$30,000 to support the creation and presentation of *Standby Snow: Chronicles of a Heatwave*, a multidisciplinary opera.

- **Mainstreet Uptown Butte:** \$20,000 to support the Montana Folk Festival.

support the Montana Folk Festival.

• **Bitter Root Resource Conservation and Development Area (aka Bitterroot Arts for Autism Heartism Community Center), Hamilton:** \$10,000 to support a dance program in the rural Bitterroot Valley.

• **Archie Bray Foundation in Helena:** \$20,000 to support a visiting artist program in ceramics.

• **Helena Presents (aka The Myrna Loy):** \$35,000 to support a multidisciplinary performing arts series highlighting Métis and Indigenous artists at the Myrna Loy.

• **Missoula Writing Collaborative:** \$30,000 to support weekly creative writing instruction for students.

• **Zootown Arts Community Center (aka the ZACC), Missoula:** \$10,000 to support the creation of several murals in the community.

• **Whitefish Theatre Co.:** \$10,000 to support music performances by International Guitar Night.

Learn more at www.arts.gov.



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NEA releases latest public participation survey

The National Endowment for the Arts recently released the full results from the nation's largest, most representative survey of adult participation in the arts. The new Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) records the different ways that American adults (age 18 and older) engage in the arts, where that engagement takes place, and why adults participate in these activities.

The survey report also tracks demographic characteristics of those who participate and respondents' perceptions of the availability of the arts in their communities. The report covers both national and state-level data as well as selected urban areas.

Since 1982, the Arts Endowment has partnered with the U.S. Census Bureau to produce the SPPA, with this edition analyzing data from 2017.

In previous studies – some sponsored by the Arts Endowment – arts participation has been positively linked with emotional well-being, social and civic activity, and tolerance and receptivity, among other factors. Regular measurements of the nation's arts participation present valuable insights not only for those engaged in the arts, but also for public leaders and policy makers looking to improve societal outcomes.

Key findings from the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts

Montana consistently scored above the national average in the new report, which tallies

U.S. adults (aged 18 and over) who over a 12-month period:

• Used electronic media to access artistic or arts-related content (73.6 percent, or 175 million adults). **Montana: 77.2 percent**

• Read books not required for work or school (44.2 percent). **Montana: 51.5 percent**

• Attended artistic, creative or cultural activities (54.3 percent, or 128 million adults) with live music performance the most frequent activity. **Montana: 66.4 percent**

• Created or performed art (33.4 percent). **Montana: 50 percent**

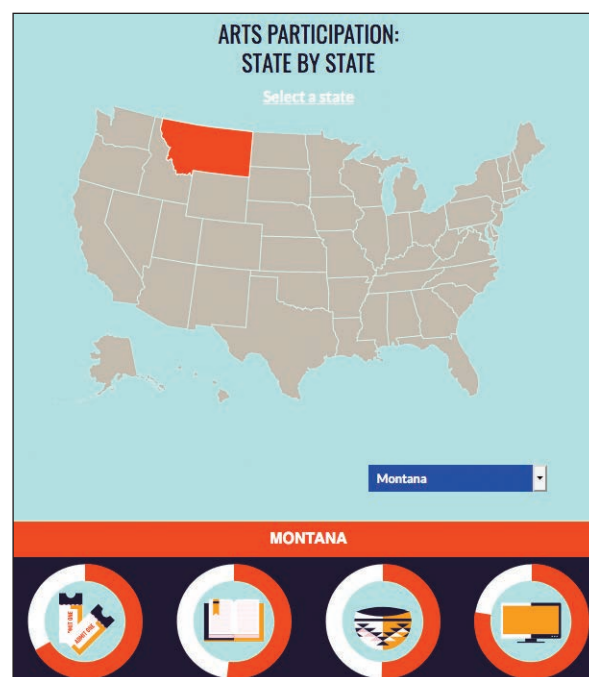
• Attended an art exhibit (23 percent). **Montana: 33.5 percent**

Other participation findings are:

• Among adults who participated in the performing arts – either as creators or performers – 62 percent did so to spend time with family and friends. By contrast, most adults who created visual artworks reported doing so because they felt “creative or creatively inspired” (61 percent).

• More than half of adults who attended artistic, creative or cultural activities did so more than twice a year.

• Among adults who sang, made music, danced or acted, 63 percent did so in the home, while 40 percent did so in a place of worship.



Comparisons between the 2017 SPPA and the previous report in 2012 can be found in U.S. Trends in Arts Attendance and Literary Reading: 2002-2017. The raw data, along with online analytics, are at the National Archive of Data on Arts & Culture, a free, public data repository funded by the Arts Endowment.

The Arts Data Profile webpage features research briefs, maps and tools on state trends in arts participation. Find the research at www.arts.gov.

COVID 19: State and National Resources

The National Endowment for the Arts offers a fact sheet aimed at applicants and awardees (www.arts.gov/COVID-19-FAQs), as well as a handy list of resources and links for the arts community: www.arts.gov/covid-19-resources-artists-and-arts-organizations.

Other National Resources

ArtsReady (artsready.org) and the National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response (ncaper.org) are regularly updating their sites with arts-specific resources and advice. ArtsReady has also circulated practical examples of measures being implemented by cultural organizations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers guidelines on how

to get mass gatherings or large community events ready for Coronavirus (cdc.org). It's also the go-to site for virus protection and hygiene tips, and the latest federal regulations.

The American Alliance of Museums, www.aam-us.org, offers advice applicable to museums and other cultural venues.

The Theatre Communications Group has posted a Coronavirus Preparedness Webinar on vimeo.com, and the Event Safety Alliance's webinar, “Prepare Your Organization for the Coronavirus Disease Outbreak” (eventsafetyalliance.webinarninja.com), may be helpful to performing arts groups.

The League of American Orchestras' Coronavirus Resource Page (americanorchestras.org) includes sample audience communications as well as other recommendations.

Americans for the Arts (blog.americansforthearts.org) offers basic individual prevention measures to share with attendees, program participants and employees.

Resources for Employers/Employees

U.S. Department of Labor & Industry: www.dol.gov/coronavirus

U.S. Small Business Administration: www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources

The Governor's Coronavirus Task Force: covid19.mt.gov

The Montana Department of Health and Human Services: dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt

CERF helps craftspeople in crisis

The Craft Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization which provides immediate support to professional craftspeople facing career-threatening emergencies such as fire, theft, illness and natural disaster.

CERF programs include interest-free loans with flexible pay-back dates, discounts on materials and equipment from craft-suppliers, and special loan funds available for craftspeople facing emergencies such as HIV/AIDS, cancer, natural disasters and heart ailments. The website also offers valuable tips on how to be ready for an emergency.

Created in 1985, CERF is the only organization of its kind in the United States. It offers professional craftspeople the resources they need to get back on their feet and back to work after career-threatening crisis.

Tax deductible donations help maintain the loan fund. For details, email info@craftemergency.org or visit the website, www.craftemergency.org.

PUBLIC VALUE PARTNERSHIPS



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The 3 Rs at work in Montana

Public Value Partnership grants between Montana nonprofit arts organizations and the Montana Arts Council champion the fact that the arts are of benefit to all the citizens of Montana and are worthy of state and federal investment.

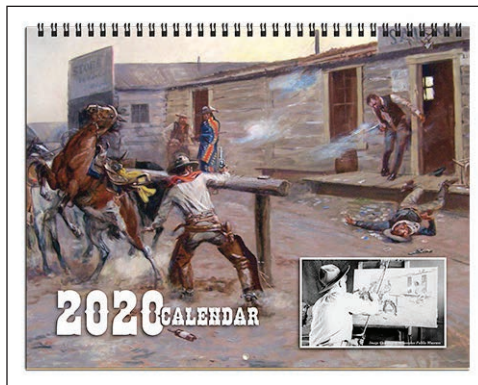
Public Value Partnerships utilize three tools we call “The Three Rs” to expand the public value of the work being done by Montana’s non-profit arts organizations:

- Building relationships;
- Creating greater relevance and meaning; and
- Establishing return on investment (measured both as economic vitality and impact on people’s lives).

MAC believes that using “The Three Rs” strengthens participation, understanding and support from audiences, donors and funders. We’d like to share some of the best examples of these stories:

Building Relationships

C.M. Russell Museum, Great Falls: Each year, the museum produces a calendar featuring the art of Charlie Russell. It is sold in the store year-round and is consistently a sought-after item. However, museum members at the Sustaining Membership level and above receive the calendar free of charge.



C.M. Russell Museum: The museum’s staff hand delivered the calendar, published annually, to directly touch base with sustaining members.

The process in years’ past has been to mail out calendars in the fall for the upcoming calendar year. Last year, however, museum staff hand delivered the calendars to those members in our immediate community. We knocked on doors and businesses and personally gave the gift of the calendar to the member. This allowed a face-to-face thank you to the member and created a great opportunity for further dialogue and cultivation.

We were able to extend personal invitations to member openings and other member-exclusive opportunities and as a result, saw an increase in attendance of member-specific events. Our biggest lesson learned was face-to-face interaction with our community is the best way to engage and inspire people to walk through our doors!

Creating Relevance

Emerson Center for the Arts and Culture, Bozeman: Last spring, the Emerson hosted The Compassion Project’s production, exhibition, lecture, and reception of the organization’s citywide art projects.

The Compassion Project was founded by Dr. Kayte Kaminski, Montana State University’s director of Health and Human Development. Her vision, spurred from a similar program in LaCrosse, WI, invited school-aged children and the community at large to participate

in workshops revolving around compassion and explore how to understand, observe, and participate in a more compassionate life.

At the end of each workshop, participants created an original artwork on an 8” x 8” wood panel. At the end of the workshop series, more than 6,000 individual panels were created.

The next step in the program’s mission was to exhibit these original artworks, host lectures and performances relating to the mission, and educate the viewers on the importance of this project and its continuation into the future.

The Compassion Project’s biggest challenge was finding a location with enough space, time, facilities and manpower to install these works. That’s where the Emerson stepped in. We installed 4,555 of the panels in the Weaver Room Gallery, second floor hallways, and the west wing

stairwell and hallways.

The process began in our backstage and theater storage spaces, where for over a week The Compassion Project, Emerson staff, and volunteers sorted, nailed ID tags, and stored thousands of pieces of community art. The following 10 days were strictly devoted to installation.

In the end, the visual impact was overwhelming. Rows upon rows, columns upon columns of colorful painted tiles were displayed, each with a unique and personal story all tied in compassion. The events that followed spanned a month’s time, and included speakers from around the country, professional artists, school children and their families, dozens of volunteers, university students, Emerson staff, and community members. It is the largest community art project installed within the city of Bozeman to date.

Our participation in this project was an honor and privilege. We were able to show our support of a new, local non-profit, display the works of almost 5,000 community participants, and engage with hundreds of artists, volunteers and supporters. The Emerson’s partnership with The Compassion Project spurred a long-lasting connection to Montana State University, school children and



Grandstreet Theatre: “Mama Mia!” brought the audience members to their feet.

their families and many, many others from the Gallatin Valley and beyond.

The whole installation was on display for three months, with smaller sections coming down gradually, until finally just shy of 1,000 pieces remain. These works will remain installed into perpetuity. The Compassion Project plans to spread their compassion curriculum to other cities in Montana and beyond. Our connection as the host site for the first project of its kind in our state will have a lasting impression on our constituents and all project participants.

Return on Investment

Grandstreet Theatre, Helena: Grandstreet brings high-quality theatre to Helena all year long. This means that community members are coming together to create a collaborative work of art, which gives local artists an opportunity to stretch their talents and learn new skills. The company’s productions invest heavily in local businesses in order to create theatre, purchasing goods and materials for sets, costumes and props.

Grandstreet is always interested in new partnerships that encourage patrons to stay downtown and enjoy other businesses. And besides all of the material and business benefits, Grandstreet believes that bringing people together from all manner of different perspectives and backgrounds helps to create a better community and gives people an opportunity to grow and, hopefully, be more community minded.

As to the theatre’s impact on people’s lives:

“Grandstreet Theatre and its school have turned our family of four into a true and strong family of many. Because of GST, our teenage daughters will move into their adult lives passionate and eager, fierce and kind, and with a much stronger sense of humanity and empathy because they have been consciously taught to always seek to understand what it feels like to walk in another person’s shoes,” writes Shana McBride Harrington. “Without the generosity and love I received from Grandstreet Theatre I never could have found my own potential as a performer and human! I hold on to advice I received from within those hallowed walls and carry it with me everywhere I go, continually paying it forward,” writes Chris Vogl.



Emerson Center for the Arts & Culture: The Compassion Project was a citywide art project that included an exhibition, lecture and reception at the art center.

Call for Cultural & Aesthetic Project Advisory Committee

Applications for membership on the Cultural and Aesthetic Project Advisory Committee will be accepted through May 6, 2020. The Montana Arts Council makes half of the appointments to this committee, and the Montana Historical Society makes the other half.

The arts council looks for a broad range of professional arts expertise, and also geographic, racial and gender balance for the committee. Obligations of

the four-year terms include attending a two-day panel meeting every other year and reviewing up to 100 grant applications online in preparation for the review.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 2020 in Helena. If you are interested in being considered, please send a letter of interest and a resume or bio electronically to Kristin Han Burgoyne at kburgoyne@mt.gov by May 6, 2020.

MONTANA ARTREPRENEURS

Montana Artrepreneur Program: Three cohorts begin journey

As we turned the corner into 2020, three new cohorts of the Montana Artrepreneur Program (MAP) began their journey, continuing the Montana Arts Council's commitment to serving and supporting individual artists. MAP coach Liz Chappie Zoller is convening a cohort of six visual artists in Three Forks, an eight-person cohort is underway in Missoula led by Rickie van Berkum, and a third cohort of five participants is being convened in Great Falls, with coach Annie Daniel Clark.

Each cohort will experience four weekend workshops – 40 hours of professional learning – as well as interim meetings designed to provide continuity and connection.

"They're each very engaged and enthusiastic, focused and committed to the work and the process" says certified MAP coach Liz Chappie Zoller of her sixth cohort. "I'm both pleased and proud of how well they've bonded and their generous and supportive nature towards each other."

This particular aspect of the Montana Artrepreneur Program is regularly cited as a meaningful and transformative outcome of MAP, and is particularly important in a far-flung state where artists may feel distant from the broader Montana arts community.

MAP artist Jennifer Ogden offers this reflection on her recent experience: "MAP has helped me to become more comfortable with marketing my work and expanding my reach as a rural Montana artist. Our MAP cadre



Three Forks MAP participants attend their second weekend workshop, held at Liz Chappie Zoller's studio. (Photo by Liz Chappie Zoller)

continues to flourish and I appreciate and rely on those personal and professional friendships cultivated through some very apt Montana Arts Council programming."

A current member of Annie Daniel Clark's cohort, Virginia Niccolucci, is already feeling the empowerment of exploring her artistic potential and developing her business: "I retired from my job as an Internal Revenue Service auditor several years ago and am now exploring the latent artist in me!"

The Montana Arts Council sees that the investment in our citizen artists becomes an investment in our shared Montana economy, where the arts are increasingly recognized as a driver. Further, this dedicated programming is designed to foster personal fulfillment

and provide a support system for artists on their journey toward a viable arts business.

MAP participant Nikki Schaubel offered this reminder of the spirit of MAP, reflected in a quote by author Stephen King: "Life isn't a support system for art. It's the other way around."

Applications open in April for next round

The Montana Artrepreneur Program (MAP) is an art-centered business development program taught by working artists and open to all visual artists. MAP provides more than 40 hours of college-level instruction, reviews 35 practical business tools, demystifies the world of

business, and affirms the title of "Artist" as a credible profession.

Instruction is focused on advancing proficiency in the artist's chosen medium, articulating their story and purpose as an artist, and engaging in the arts community. MAP instruction is centered on four weekend-long workshops held roughly eight weeks apart.

Applications to the next MAP instructional year will be open in April. To learn more about MAP, visit art.mt.gov/map and, to stay up to date on the upcoming application timeline, like Montana Arts Council on Facebook or contact Arts Education Director Monica Grable at 406-444-6522 or Monica.Grable@mt.gov.



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Strategic Investment Grant funds available

Strategic Investment Grant (SIG) funds are still available for upcoming projects and professional development.

These grants provide up to \$1,000 in matching funds for professional artists, nonprofit 501(c)(3) arts organizations and Preschool-Grade 12 teachers in Montana, and are available in four categories:

- **Professional development grants** help build individual art skills and knowledge, arts careers and/or arts businesses.

- **Market expansion grants** help increase exposure and improve marketing or promotion, opportunities for exhibition, performance and/or sales to a wider or new audience.

- **Grants for public outreach arts activities** fund ongoing or one-time activities that are designed to reach a new or expanded audience.

- **Challenges and emergencies grants** provide resources for artists or arts organizations experiencing challenges or emergencies that impede the ability to continue work.

The application deadline is the 15th of the month.

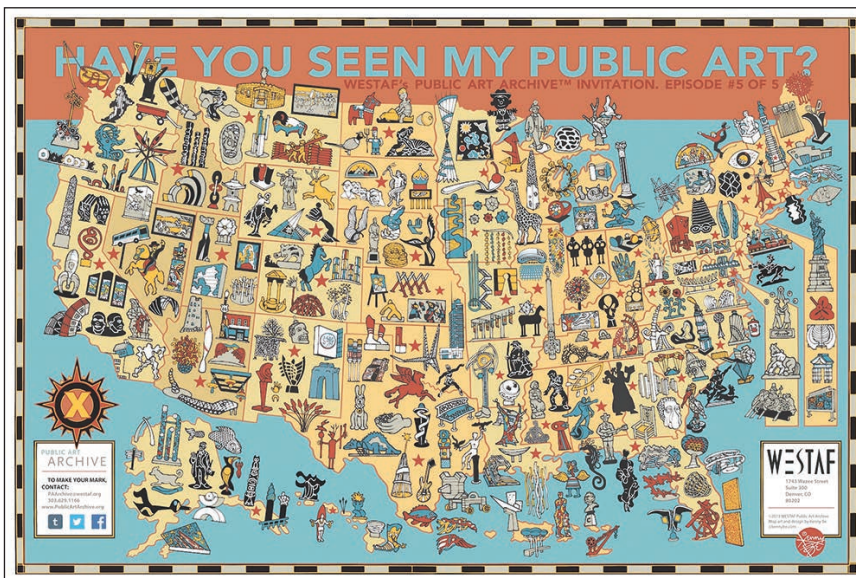
For guidelines and more information visit art.mt.gov/sig; contact Kristin Han Burgoyne (kburgoyne@mt.gov or 406-444-6449) for more information.

Public Art Archive celebrates 10th anniversary

The Public Art Archive (PAA), powered by the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF), celebrates 10 years in 2020. Over the past decade, the archives have documented over 14,000 international public artworks and provided free access to explore those works on both desktop and mobile sites.

Managed by a team of specialists from the public art and collection management fields, the archive is a free, constantly growing online and mobile database of completed public artworks. Artists and art enthusiasts can explore public art on the go with the location app; or browse online by artist name, collection, material or work-type. The archives are integrated with Google Maps to support mapping features for virtual or on-foot exploration, and offer filters that aid in research and education.

In a blog post by PAA manager Lori Goldstein, posted Feb. 25 in honor of the archives' 10-year anniversary, she notes



how PAA "has grown from a collection of ideas attempting to fill a resource gap into a continually growing repository and suite of services built to 'make public art more public.'"

Goldstein notes that public art is increasingly integrated into urban planning, placemaking, and the development of cultural tourism. "The commissioning of public art has prompted a growing network of public

and private stakeholders, researchers, students, and public audiences that desire educational resources about the content, depth, and breadth of public art that currently exists."

Eligibility Requirements

The archive recognizes the wide variety of practices and forms that public art takes. This includes objects and experiences that range from the permanent to the ephemeral, traditional sculpture to projects focused on social exchange, as well as those works supported by public or private funding

sources (or a combination).

To qualify for inclusion in the Public Art Archive, a work of public art must meet two requirements:

- The work must be publicly viewable;
- The work must be sanctioned, commissioned, placed, or displayed through an official acquisition process.

For more information, visit www.publicartarchive.org.

Deadline for next round of TourWest grants extended to May 1

Due to developments surrounding COVID-19, WESTAF has extended the TourWest 2020 application deadline to May 1.

TourWest is a competitive grant program that provides subsidies to arts and community organizations in the 13-state WESTAF region, which includes Montana, for the presentation of out-of-state touring performing and literary artists.

Supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, TourWest

standard performance grants are available in an amount of up to \$2,500 or 50% of the artistic fees, whichever is less.

Eligible projects in the 2020-2021 cycle must take place between Sept. 1, 2020 and Aug. 31, 2021 and include one public performance and one educational outreach activity. Grant applicants can expect to be notified of their award status in July.

Visit tourwest.gosmart.org for application guidelines and policies.

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STATE OF THE

Arts



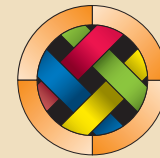
Poetry Out Loud

Adam Langston of Belt accepts his participation certificate for the Montana Poetry Out Loud State Finals from Montana Arts Council Executive Director Tatiana Gant, as other finalists look on. Read more about this year's contest on page 14.

(Photo by Katie Knight)

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Crow Tell Their Own Story in Major Exhibit

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Call 406-444-6449

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