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**Announcing MAM's Big Night: 2021 Art Auction: February 20, 2021
Embracing New Format and Partnering with Recording Artists**

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The Annual Art Auction at the Missoula Art Museum (MAM) will be produced virtually on February 20, 2021. MAM's signature benefit art auction has been a seasonal favorite every year since the museum opened in 1975 and typically culminates in a large, elegant gala with a live auctioneer. This coming year the virtual event, called MAM's Big Night, will celebrate the vibrant art community and the museum's role as a champion of contemporary art for 45 years. The inclusion of musicians and the creation of a community album are a first for the museum.

While the pandemic continues to affect all artists the performing arts have been hit especially hard and MAM has partnered with the Montana Area Music Association (MAMA) to create an opportunity for recording artists of Montana to be part of a community album that will debut at this year's auction. This album will feature musicians who have a connection to Missoula and/or Montana and will be available by digital download at MAM's Big Night on February 20. MAM and MAMA feel this project embodies the spirit of artists helping artists across disciplines and satisfying Missoula's dearth of live music during the pandemic.

Over the past four decades, MAM has been a cultural beacon in downtown Missoula and in recent years has expanded its footprint to feature a gallery dedicated to contemporary Indigenous artists and an outdoor Art Park, and is home to a robust education program, including the Fifth Grade Art Experience. The proceeds from the 2021 Benefit Art Auction will help MAM stay free of admission and support these programs during the pandemic.

"The generosity of artists and patrons of the arts is something to behold at each year's auction. This combined force has fueled MAM since its grassroots beginning to the present. MAM's Big Night will be a testament to the fact that visual art and music are essential to life," said Laura Millin, executive director of the Missoula Art Museum.

The call for visual artists is open now with a deadline of December 15, 2020. Visual artists of any medium are invited to submit one artwork for consideration in the online art auction. For details on the selection timeline, read the full prospectus at mam.submittable.com.

The call for musicians of all genres is open now via mam.submittable.com. Musicians are welcome to submit up to three pre-recorded songs. The deadline for musical submissions to be considered is December 21, 2020.

For questions about the auction event, call the museum at 406.728.0447 or email Laura Millin, executive director, at lauramillin@missoulaartmuseum.org. Visit www.missoulaartmuseum.org for more information.

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About MAM: Founded in 1975 and accredited by the American Association of Museums since 1987, MAM is emerging as the leading contemporary art museum in the Intermountain West. MAM is situated on the traditional, ancestral territories of the Séliš (Salish or “Flathead”) and Q̓lispé (upper Kalispel or Pend d’Oreille) peoples. MAM is committed to respecting the indigenous stewards of the land it occupies. Their rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Montana and to the work of MAM. MAM is a fully accessible, free public museum boasting eight exhibition spaces, a library, and education center in the heart of Missoula’s historic downtown.

About MAMA: Founded in 2019, MAMA works to connect and support up-and-coming musicians through professional development and advocacy, while strengthening and engaging the greater Montana music community.