The Missoula Art Museum: At a Glance

A free, contemporary art museum in western Montana:

- The museum is housed in the former Carnegie Library in downtown Missoula. MAM opened its doors as the Missoula Museum of the Arts in 1975 through grassroots movement of artists and community members.
- The building was renovated in 2006 and now contains eight galleries, including the dedicated Lynda Frost Gallery for Contemporary American Indian Art. The Missoula Art Park, an outdoor sculpture park, opened in 2017. MAM also has a library, bookstore, vault and large classroom, complete with a printing press.
- The museum is housed in the former Carnegie Library in downtown Missoula. MAM opened its doors as the Missoula Museum of the Arts in 1975 through grassroots movement of artists and community members.
- The Fifth Grade Art Experience (FGAE) invites every public and private elementary school in Missoula County and beyond (within a 70-mile radius) to participate in a tour of the museum, a hands-on art-making activity, and a visit to the Missoula Public Library at no charge. FGAE serves an average of 45 to 50 fifth-grade classes each year and has reached over 50,000 youth since its inception in 1985.
- The museum is housed in the former Carnegie Library in downtown Missoula. MAM opened its doors as the Missoula Museum of the Arts in 1975 through grassroots movement of artists and community members.
- The museum is housed in the former Carnegie Library in downtown Missoula. MAM opened its doors as the Missoula Museum of the Arts in 1975 through grassroots movement of artists and community members.
- The museum is housed in the former Carnegie Library in downtown Missoula. MAM opened its doors as the Missoula Museum of the Arts in 1975 through grassroots movement of artists and community members.
- The museum is housed in the former Carnegie Library in downtown Missoula. MAM opened its doors as the Missoula Museum of the Arts in 1975 through grassroots movement of artists and community members.

Pushing the boundaries of arts education with:

- The Fifth Grade Art Experience (FGAE) invites every public and private elementary school in Missoula County and beyond (within a 70-mile radius) to participate in a tour of the museum, a hands-on art-making activity, and a visit to the Missoula Public Library at no charge. FGAE serves an average of 45 to 50 fifth-grade classes each year and has reached over 50,000 youth since its inception in 1985.
- The museum is housed in the former Carnegie Library in downtown Missoula. MAM opened its doors as the Missoula Museum of the Arts in 1975 through grassroots movement of artists and community members.
- The museum is housed in the former Carnegie Library in downtown Missoula. MAM opened its doors as the Missoula Museum of the Arts in 1975 through grassroots movement of artists and community members.
- The museum is housed in the former Carnegie Library in downtown Missoula. MAM opened its doors as the Missoula Museum of the Arts in 1975 through grassroots movement of artists and community members.

Mission Statement
MAM serves the public by engaging audiences and artists in the exploration of contemporary art relevant to the community, state, and region.

Land Acknowledgement
Situated on the traditional, ancestral territories of the Seli’tl (Salish or “Flathead”) and K’icol (upper Kalispel or Pend d’Oreille) peoples, MAM is committed to respecting the indigenous stewards of the land it occupies. These rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Montana and to the work of MAM.

Director’s Comments
Laura J. Millin

We are reinforced and humbled by the love and support that poured in from across the country in February for MAM’s Big Night: the 2021 Benefit Art Auction. In the midst of the pandemic, we were forced to break with the grand tradition of an annual gala and were richly rewarded by the unexpected. MAM gained new friends who both collected art and donated and regained old friends who returned to our circle of supporters for the first time in years. Altogether, a bigger, broader circle of art lovers attended and embraced a wider circle of artists and artworks than ever before in the 49-year history of MAM’s art auction. All this without the expensive trappings of event production! We are grateful to artist donors, collectors, buddies, and supporters who all gave for the love of art and the love of MAM. Thank you for sticking with us on this wild ride.

The response to MAM’s Big Night underlines our instinct that art and culture are needed more now than ever. MAM is striving to meet the challenges of today by continuing to present progressive exhibitions and programming with contemporary emerging and Indigenous artists (see pages 6–7 and 12–13). MAM is continuing to strengthen its collection while actively sharing it through our art in public places program throughout Missoula. MAM is actively publishing catalogs that delve into artists’ work and challenge us to think critically about who and where we are in time and space (see back cover). Our greatest pride and joy are the high-quality virtual educational programs for teachers, families, and individuals (see pages 16–17). MAM’s virtual exhibition-related programs including artist interviews, talks, and tours for the public have been ongoing and will soon get a boost when our new Digital & Audience Engagement Specialist comes on board. This crisis is teaching MAM to reach audiences in new ways and to bring contemporary art to the community.

We feel extremely fortunate that MAM had met its $5 million fundraising goal set by our 40 Forward Campaign (see page 15) before the pandemic descended and had a strong infrastructure undergirding the organization. MAM invested the generously donated funds in ways that positioned the intuition to weather the crises by strategically expanding staff, extending our educational outreach regionally, growing the endowed fund, and focusing on the organization. MAM is actively publishing catalogs that delve into artists’ work and challenge us to think critically about who and where we are in time and space (see back cover). Our greatest pride and joy are the high-quality virtual educational programs for teachers, families, and individuals (see pages 16–17). MAM’s virtual exhibition-related programs including artist interviews, talks, and tours for the public have been ongoing and will soon get a boost when our new Digital & Audience Engagement Specialist comes on board. This crisis is teaching MAM to reach audiences in new ways and to bring contemporary art to the community.

We feel extremely fortunate that MAM had met its $5 million fundraising goal set by our 40 Forward Campaign (see page 15) before the pandemic descended and had a strong infrastructure undergirding the organization. MAM invested the generously donated funds in ways that positioned the intuition to weather the crises by strategically expanding staff, extending our educational outreach regionally, growing the endowed fund, and focusing on the organization. MAM is committed to respecting the indigenous stewards of the land it occupies. These rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Montana and to the work of MAM.

We are challenged to respond to rapid change and reimagine and reposition the museum to weather the crises by strategically expanding staff, extending our educational outreach regionally, growing the endowed fund, and focusing on the organization. MAM is committed to respecting the indigenous stewards of the land it occupies. These rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Montana and to the work of MAM.
Expanding MAM’s Collections: Creating and Preserving Our Story
By Laura J. Millin, Executive Director

During the 40th anniversary of the museum in 2015, we developed a long-term strategy for institutional development to serve our community and create an even more extraordinary cultural destination in the heart of downtown Missoula. Recognizing that our mission—to serve the public by engaging audiences and artists in the exploration of contemporary art relevant to the community, state, and region—demands that we continuously shape our efforts to improve our reach and impact, we launched a $5 million comprehensive fundraising campaign, called 40 Forward. The campaign successfully ended on June 30, 2020, surpassing its goal, and raised upward of $5.3 million. That’s a lot of love of art and love of MAM!

One of the four major components of this campaign focused on strengthening the core of MAM’s Permanent Collection, which comprises emerging and contemporary artists with two distinct areas of focus: Contemporary American Indian Art and Montana Modernists. We renewed our commitment to distill and preserve these rich movements that speak to our place in art history, and to the influence of its art and artists. MAM led this effort with robust curatorial work that featured publications and touring exhibitions, loans, and collection expansion. The results were overwhelming:

- We added 62 acquisitions to MAM’s Contemporary American Indian Art Collection (CAIAC).
- Artworks from the CAIAC were featured in three exhibition catalogs, a touring exhibition traveled extensively statewide, and several loans were made to institutions across the county.
- The Montana Modernist collection grew substantially with 54 artworks, and three touring exhibits featured Montana Modernists.
- Altogether, MAM’s collection was expanded with gifts from 50 donors. Gifts of art, gifts in support of acquisitions and ongoing care to the collection represented 23 percent of the 40 Forward Campaign donations, totaling $1.2 million.

One of the four major components of this campaign focused on strengthening the core of MAM’s Permanent Collection, which comprises emerging and contemporary artists with two distinct areas of focus: Contemporary American Indian Art and Montana Modernists. We renewed our commitment to distill and preserve these rich movements that speak to our place in art history, and to the influence of its art and artists. MAM led this effort with robust curatorial work that featured publications and touring exhibitions, loans, and collection expansion. The results were overwhelming:

- We added 62 acquisitions to MAM’s Contemporary American Indian Art Collection (CAIAC).
- Artworks from the CAIAC were featured in three exhibition catalogs, a touring exhibition traveled extensively statewide, and several loans were made to institutions across the county.
- The Montana Modernist collection grew substantially with 54 artworks, and three touring exhibits featured Montana Modernists.
- Altogether, MAM’s collection was expanded with gifts from 50 donors. Gifts of art, gifts in support of acquisitions and ongoing care to the collection represented 23 percent of the 40 Forward Campaign donations, totaling $1.2 million.

The Radical Welcome & The Role of Virtual Programs
By Jenny Bevill, Educator and Outreach Specialist, and Brandon Reintjes, Senior Curator

Free admission at the Missoula Art Museum has always been central to extending a Radical Welcome to all visitors. This guiding philosophy holds the museum responsible for breaking down barriers to entry and engagement for everyone. Previously, this included initiatives like free bus programs to bring schoolchildren into the museum. During the coronavirus pandemic, the Radical Welcome is expanded to include virtual offerings of all kinds. Using the guiding principles outlined below, MAM seeks to amplify the artist’s voice while augmenting the role of contemporary art as an educator, incubator, and convener for social engagement. Taken together, this results in the museum serving as an institution that reflects and helps its community.

Acknowledgement: MAM holds a dedicated focus on contemporary Native artists in the Lynda M. Frost Contemporary American Indian Art Gallery and through the MAM Collection. In addition, all programs, classes, and tours at MAM, including our virtual courses, begin with a land acknowledgement statement, which was written in collaboration with Salish and Kootenai Tribal leaders. This reflects MAM’s ongoing commitment to center Native voices and provides opportunities for contemporary American Indian artists to showcase their work.

Action: Building awareness of contemporary American Indian artists working today creates a broad opportunity to recognize the contributions and significance of Native culture, as well as stop the erasure of Native people and begin to undo the harmful effects of colonization.

An example of the Radical Welcome in action is MAM’s Museum as Megaphone, an online learning platform designed to amplify the voices of artists and students by offering virtual courses and spotlighting contemporary American Indian artists. At its inception, Megaphone was envisioned to reach Montana’s rural and Tribal populations—those for whom distance, geography, and whether presented challenges to visiting the museum galleries in person.

The Radical Welcome flips the script of traditional, hierarchical learning by putting the tools directly into the hands of teachers and students. Virtual access to tours and art-making allows our creatively aging population, as well as those with special needs, to more fully and safely participate.

Access: Virtual programs at MAM are always free and self-paced to afford maximum flexibility for delivery. They can be guided by the teacher or parent or accessed independently by the student. Virtual access to tours and art-making allows our creatively aging population, as well as those with special needs, to more fully and safely participate.

The Radical Welcome flips the script of traditional, hierarchical learning by putting the tools directly into the hands of teachers and students. Virtual delivery, including feedback and sharing, cultivates a conversational and caring relationship between the museum and the people it serves. MAM works with a long list of partners, including the Montana Office of Public Instruction and the Indian Education for All department, to chart this course.

Interested in supporting these programs? Donations and memberships make them possible. Visit missoulartmuseum.org/donate to give or become a member today!
Offering a fresh start following a long, strange year, the spring exhibitions at MAM provide an opportunity to dive back in and connect with great works of art by accomplished artists. MAM presents five solo exhibitions — each of which takes on the task of envisioning a utopia or dystopia in their own way, allowing the viewer to reinvent the world with the artist’s direction, and consider relationships and outcomes at their most fundamental levels.

Visit the Lynda M. Frost Contemporary American Indian Gallery to experience the phenomenal special single-object exhibition on loan from Art Bridges, featuring Nicholas Galanin’s I Think It Goes Like This (Gold). Galanin works from his experience as a mixed ancestry American, Tlingit, and Unangax artist to engage the complexities of contemporary Indigenous identity, culture, and representation. In this piece, Galanin deconstructs a mass-produced totem pole, manufactured in Indonesia, and sold in gift shops throughout Sitka, Alaska, where the artist lives, as a provocative reference to the appropriation and commodification of Native culture and decimation of Indigenous knowledge. With support from the Art Bridges Foundation.

Nancy Erickson’s solo exhibition honors the artist’s 2020 gift of 22 pieces to the MAM Collection. These works are organic, free form quilted paintings, which operate as sophisticated visual statements of environmental activism, expressing the artist’s concerns about humanity, the animal world, and the planet. However, Erickson made these works with an important premise: “All the works...are part of an ongoing series of visual narratives taking place in a post-nuclear time in an artist’s studio,” as a device that gives her free license to imagine the most fantastic. Not to be confused for whimsical depictions of wildlife, Erickson combines her life-long environmental activism with neon-bright quilted sculpture to examine how animals and humans interact ever time. Missoula artist Eric Carlson debuts new drawings in his first museum exhibition, Entanglements. Drawing on his experience as an illustrator and anthropologist, Carlson created a series of complex, large-scale pieces that tell stories inspired by his fieldwork in Glacier National Park, Hawaii, and Alaska. Carlson uses drawing and painting to explore the enmeshed relationships of living organisms over millennia rather than capturing snapshots of nature. “These paintings are in motion, alive, energized by the creatures who inhabit them,” he says of the works.

Jon Lodge presents new work in a solo exhibition, Fracture. Lodge draws on his life as a jazz musician and commercial printer, as well as the traumatic experience of losing his home to a rockslide, to visualize the small breaks and changes that affect our world. The pieces in Fracture are not paintings, but use the simplest form of paint, white gesso (usually a surface preparation), to receive carbon. Lodge creates what he calls a “planned system of randomness,” which allows him to create circumstances to allow the art to make itself. Thank you to exhibition and catalog sponsors: Aunt Dofe’s Gallery, the art to make itself. Thank you to exhibition and catalog sponsors: Aunt Dofe’s Gallery, the

Nicholas Galanin is a Tlingit/Unangax artist whose work offers perspective rooted in connection to land and broad engagement with contemporary culture. Galanin’s works are vessels of knowledge, culture and technology — inherently political, generous, unflinching, and poetic. He employs diverse materials and processes to expand and forward dialogue on what artistic production is and how it can be used to envision possibility. Galanin allows his concepts to determine his materials and processes. His practice is expansive and includes numerous collaborations with visual and recording artists.

“The goal of colonization is often consumption and extraction, and then it just continues on. But it’s through memory and connection to places—and sharing that memory and connection—that we can demonstrate, share, and educate about ways of being in a world that are healthy for not just us but our future generations. [My practice involves] challenging what forms of Indigenous art might look like, or how it’s activated through conversation and community.”

Galanin received a BFA from London Guildhall University in England and an MFA from Massey University in New Zealand. He has also apprenticed with master carvers and jewelers, including his father. Galanin participated in the Venice Biennale in 2017, the Whitney Biennial in 2019, and the Biennale of Sydney in 2020. He was named a United States Artists Rauschenberg Foundation USA Fellow in 2012. His work is in the permanent collections of the LACMA, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Denver Art Museum, Peabody Essex Museum, Princeton Art Museum, and Vancouver Art Gallery. Galanin lives and works in Sitka, Alaska.
Nancy Erickson is one of Montana’s most treasured living artists. She was born in Ohio but grew up on a ranch in Livingston, Montana, near livestock and wildlife. Erickson’s love for animals and the natural world inspired her to study science at the University of Iowa where she earned a BA in Zoology in 1957 and an MS in Food and Nutrition in 1962. She began to study painting while living in Buffalo, New York, and moved to Missoula in 1965 to pursue art at the University of Montana. In 1969 she received an MFA in painting. Erickson has participated in more than 500 exhibitions around the globe since 1965. Erickson is a pioneer in contemporary fiber arts and internationally celebrated for contributions to the medium. Her large, free-form, quilted animals are her most endearing and enduring works. For more than 50 years, Erickson has addressed human/animal interactions that explore both conflicts and fantastical folly. She lives in a mountain canyon near Missoula, with Ron, her partner of many years, and with the deer, cougars, and bears who have lived in the canyon for centuries.

Jon Lodge grew up in Red Lodge, Montana, and studied jazz performance and composition at Berklee College of Music in Boston in the 1960s. After becoming the school’s photographer and art director, he gradually migrated into visual media. Lodge performed jazz from 1964 to 1973 in the Boston area before returning to Montana. He recently retired from Artcraft Printing in Billings where he managed the printing shop for many years. Lodge’s work fuses systems and methodologies of music and visual art with idiosyncratic materials and processes to operate in what he calls a planned system of randomness. His work is featured in the permanent collections of the Yellowstone Art Museum, Missoula Art Museum, University of Wyoming Art Museum, Nicolaysen Art Museum, and MAM. Lodge has had a steady presence in Missoula art exhibitions since his solo show at the Brink Gallery in 2015. In 2019 he was published in two books about the prehistory of Montana and the prehistoric hunter-gatherers of the Great Plains. Carlson’s exhibition at MAM is his first museum show.

Eric Carlson is an archeologist and illustrator from Juneau, Alaska. He has worked as an on-site illustrator for excavations at Neolithic and Early Bronze Age sites in Jordan, Early Monastic and Medieval sites in Western Ireland, and at Late Prehistoric village sites in northwestern Alaska. As an illustrator, he publishes scientific and archeologic work as well as fictional book illustrations. Most recently he has been working for the National Park Service in Glacier National Park. During the winter months, his off-season from work, Carlson lives in Missoula and paints from a studio in the back of Art Haus Framing. Carlson has had a steady presence in Missoula art exhibitions since his solo show at the Brink Gallery in 2015. In 2019 he was published in two books about the prehistory of Montana and the prehistoric hunter-gatherers of the Great Plains. Carlson’s exhibition at MAM is his first museum show.

“The paintings direct attention to our nation’s valued natural spaces and the importance of direct engagement with them. The simple process of sitting, sketching, seeing, and remembering in these natural settings honors the places and the creatures who reside there, and who continue to build entangled worlds.”

“In the improvisational atmosphere of playing jazz, it all comes together and has this structure, this relationship to the melodic pattern, to harmony, and to rhythm. In free jazz, we eliminate some of those structures, but there is still the interface or the grid of even the instrumentation locked in to give it form. All of that feeling and intellectual connection, I have translated into my visual art making process.”
Summer

Exhibitions

This summer, MAM is participating in EXTRACTION: Art on the Edge of the Abyss. A special project of the CODEX Foundation, it aims to produce a multimedia and immersive art intervention, which investigates extractive industry in all its forms. With sites stretching throughout the United States and abroad, MAM is part of an organic collective of participating artists, art venues, curators, and arts supporters. MAM has developed a suite of exhibitions that are part of this larger project.

Eden Of The Abyss: Artists Picturing the Berkeley Pit includes artists Jean Arnold, Eben Goff, Kristi Hager, Marcy James, Peter Koch in collaboration with Didier Muell and Nolan Salts. These artists present a lineup of works that are all connected via their studio practice and the Berkeley Pit. They have created a suite of narrative paintings that respond to the climate change, industry, and technology. In this new series of works, Appleby distills her perceptions of natural elements from the forest surrounding her Montana studio. The title of the exhibit is taken from a quote by author Rebecca Solnit: "With each panel, I've illustrated the progressive vandalized and irreparable landscape, the increasingly toxic waste pond lake, and the chewing and tearing at the seams of the earth caused by rock removal; the devastation occurring without consequence, without imagination… The work is another response to the dangers of aurora mining that Montana's industrial climate poses to the entire range of ecological systems."

Jean Arnold's Us and Them depicts the history of Montana's industrial climate. The work is a series of collagraphs that examine the internalized processes of industrialization, extraction, climate change, cultural displacement, and colonization.

Jerry Rankin is one of Montana's most significant living artists. He was mentored by two of the titans in Montana's early Modernist art movement: Rudy Autio in high school and Robert DeWeese at Montana State University. During his decades-long career as an artist, Rankin has developed a distinct visual language and his endless curiosity and investigation of the natural world through his studio practice continues today. Rankin's images are reflections on the landscape and the artist's practice with a suite of narrative paintings. "Within each panel, I've illustrated the progressive vandalized and irreparable landscape, the increasingly toxic waste pond lake, and the chewing and tearing at the seams of the earth caused by rock removal; the devastation occurring without consequence, without imagination… The work is another response to the dangers that Montana's industrial climate poses to the entire range of ecological systems."

Jerry Rankin, Golden Sunlight IV, 2016, collagraph print, 22 x 30 inches courtesy of the artist, copyright the artist. 

Jerry Rankin, Golden Sunlight IV, 2016, collagraph print, 22 x 30 inches courtesy of the artist, copyright the artist.
Anne Appleby lives on a timbered mountainside outside of Jefferson City, Montana. Her home and studio look into the woods where the landscape and flora provide Appleby with endless inspiration. She is known for painting focused meditations on the natural cycles of the plants and trees. A Hymn for the Mother is a departure for Appleby with limited, muted color paintings that explore traditional, romantic landscapes as opposed to distillations of pure color.

“Once in the mode to create, I like to just let the work take me where I’m supposed to go... But very often, parts of the painting that seemed to be the best expressions turn out to be better by covering them up. Maybe that is due in part to me, covering myself, layer by layer. More likely, however, it is a line formed by my own contemporary experiences in mainstream society connected to the years endured by ancestral experiences of debumanization, racism, and cultural genocide.”

Robert Harrison: It Takes a Village
May-October 2021 in the Art Park

Harrison is at the forefront of radical change in the ceramic community. Author of Sustainable Ceramics: A Practical Guide and leading the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts Green Committee, Harrison challenges the medium’s extractive history and encourages its long-term sustainability. Harrison is internationally known for his large-scale, site-specific architectural sculpture. For the Missoula Art Park, Harrison will exhibit site-specific wire-mesh house structures that continue his exploration of his architecturally based work.

The concept for his installation juxtaposes and stacks small and large iconic house forms with human scale and bright colors. Harrison invites the Missoula community to contribute material—brick, stone, porcelain—to fill the interior space. The accumulation of house forms suggests a community, giving voice to the adage that celebrates collective action.

He has received numerous accolades from national and international ceramic academies. Most recently, he was awarded the Artist Innovation Award by the Montana Arts Council in 2019.
MAM Raises $5.3 Million

Most Successful Campaign Secures Museum’s Bold Future

By Tracy Cosgrove, Deputy Director For Finance And Advancement

Campaign Donors from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2020

To all of you, we say thank you. Together, we have built a strong base in support of our creative vision. And from this, we will continue to craft our bold future as more forward.

Our vision of an outdoor sculpture park now ensures the future of dynamic 3-D exhibition programming every year in downtown Missoula.

Our vision of a collaborative program for growing collection, research, and art scholarship underlined the 40 Forward Campaign heralds the future possibility of creating a space at this MAM.

Our vision of a dedicated educational program for students and young artists will continue to secure the future of this program in perpetuity with the Art Associated Education Fund within MAM’s endowment.

Our vision of producing challenging exhibitions and programs will continue to include works created through our funding partnerships and collaborations in support of world-class art programming.

We would like to acknowledge our campaign leadership — the volunteers and boards who helped us complete the campaign — and thank them for their outstanding service. Thank you for sharing your MAM vision with us for making this campaign success real.

40 Forward Leadership Team

Betsy Bach, Leslie Gallipazza, Brian Sippy (chair), Cathay Smith, Mike Goodhart

Momentum Team

Shannon Alexander, Betsy Bach, J. Martin Burke, Blythe Brock*, Mae Nunn Ellington, Jerry Fertl, Nici Holt, Margaret Kingsland, Tom Matlock, Ruth Renkering, Jolene Siler, Betsy Fapp, Shannon Santley-Abt

ART PARK TEAM: Margaret Bong, Leslie Gallipazza (chair), Kevin Gordon*, Giselle Meanem, John Park, Nancy Rine, Jim Snyder, Shelia Snyder, Marcia Williams

Business Team

Betsy Bach (chair), Stephanie Christiansen, John Gimpelson

Next Generation Team

Lara Dorman, Inge Erickson, Becca Nargiszt, Cathay Smith (chair), Taylor Valliant

Regional Team

Sammy Nunn (chair), Kate Sutherland, R. David Wilson

Kevin Gordon

Museum Acquisition Fund

MAM is proud to announce that an art acquisition fund in memory of Kevin Gordon was established with a generous lead gift in Kevin’s honor from Susan and Roy O’Connor, with additional gifts from 25 other loving friends and from Kevin’s dear family: Kim, Phillips, Olivia, Michelle, Luke and Laurens. Please join us in creating a lasting tribute to Kevin by making a donation to help purchase artwork for MAM’s permanent collection in his memory.

Kevin Gordon (1956-2021) accepting 2018 MAM Award. Photo: Slikati Photographers
Museum as Megaphone
By Kay Grissom-Kiely, Curator of Education

Museum as Megaphone, the Missoula Art Museum’s distance-learning platform, was born out of a simple idea: to bring the museum experience to children across the state, for free. Given the size and demography of Montana, schoolchildren often face economic barriers to accessing MAM, as well as geographical and weather-related concerns.

We gathered decades of experience as well as best practices in the field of art education, museum education, and visual arts, to build this just for you. The technological expertise of Inspired Classroom, a Missoula-based tech company, has designed a site that is easy to navigate and mirrors the actual experience of coming to MAM as closely as possible.

The pilot program was launched in 2019 and served two classes of sixth graders at St. Ignatius Middle School on the Flathead Reservation. It successfully delivered a tour and a hands-on art-making experience and facilitated sharing. In early 2020, this program was expanded to deliver MAM’s signature Fifth Grade Art Experience (FGAE) to eight rural schools across the state, including schools on the Crow Agency and Fort Peck Reservation.

Now, in response to the global pandemic, social justice reckoning, and urgent need for virtual delivery of arts education, the fledgling program delivers arts-integrated curriculum to hundreds of students across the state isolated in their homes. Inspired Classroom supplied the technology, coordination, and marketing to schools statewide for the “Live Days,” where fifth grade classrooms teleconferenced with exhibiting artist Doug Turman. Additionally, MAM delivered over 650 sanitized art supply kits to Missoula County Public Schools so each child, whether learning in-person or virtually, could participate in the art-making section of FGAE.

Interested in checking out this program for yourself?
All you need is a Wi-Fi connection and a computer with a camera and microphone to participate! Teachers and families can access this platform whenever they choose, with three online courses that are self-paced, appropriate for in-person, remote, or hybrid classrooms, meet Montana state content standards in visual arts, social studies, English/language arts, and Indian Education for All. Visit missoulartmuseum.org/virtual-programs to learn more.

The following courses are available now:
• Love Letters to the Collection: Students engage with contemporary Indigenous art and artists and write letters to works of art from MAM’s Contemporary American Indian Art Collection. Appropriate for all ages.
• Witness to Wartime: The Painted Diary of Takuichi Fujii: An exploration of an artist’s experience at the Minidoka Internment Camp in Idaho during World War II and drawing connections with current national and global events through reflective art and journaling prompts. Appropriate for middle and high school students.

The 35th year of Fifth Grade Art Experience ran from October through December 2020. It served 1,270 students from 87 classrooms across 11 counties in Montana. Here’s what some of the participants had to say:

“Usually when I do art, I crumple it up, but Doug [Turman] made me realize that if it is not the way I wanted, to keep it and look at it later!”
—Student, Franklin School

“My students really enjoyed the experience, from the Q & A and creating with Doug [Turman], to sharing their own artwork, to exploring MAM virtually through all the resources you shared. We would love to participate in anything that MAM has to offer in the future.”
—Teacher, Seeley Lake Elementary School

The following courses are available now:
• Love Letters to the Collection: Students engage with contemporary Indigenous art and artists and write letters to works of art from MAM’s Contemporary American Indian Art Collection. Appropriate for all ages.
• Witness to Wartime: The Painted Diary of Takuichi Fujii: An exploration of an artist’s experience at the Minidoka Internment Camp in Idaho during World War II and drawing connections with current national and global events through reflective art and journaling prompts. Appropriate for middle and high school students.

The 35th year of this program featured three contemporary art exhibitions at MAM. Doug Turman: Curious; Kristi Hager: Equal; and Love Letters to the Collection. Grades 3–8 are invited to join this self-paced course that includes artmaking with simple materials found at home.

Grades 3–8 are invited to join this self-paced course that includes artmaking with simple materials found at home.
Create! up-to-date calendar, as well as recordings Art Museum continue on a virtual/hybrid Patrick Hoban. sculpture from found materials. T aught by sustainability, campers will create a group drawings, and monoprints from live falcons Create life-sized raptor sculptures, detailed thirteen participants. Summer Art Camps Campers to register or call the museum!
The Missoula Art Museum is honored to present Corwin Clairmont: Two-Headed Arrow/The Tar Sands Project, a catalog about Clairmont’s 2018 exhibition of the same name. This catalog is the definitive monograph of Clairmont’s (Salish and Kootenai) 2018 exhibition. Features six essays by leading contemporary Native artists and scholars. This project was supported by funds from the PROP Foundation and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Look for new exhibition catalogs featuring Anne Appleby: Hymn to the Mother, Jon Lodge: Fracture, and Sean Chandler: New Works to be published this summer!

Visit missoulaartmuseum.org/catalogs for more information.