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Betty LaDuke’s “Bountiful Harvest: Celebrating Oregon’s Farm Workers” to be exhibited in the Governor’s Office – Feb 3 - April 2

Salem, Oregon – Ashland artist Betty LaDuke will exhibit “Bountiful Harvest: Celebrating Oregon’s Farm Workers” in the Governor’s Office of the Capitol Building in Salem from Feb. 3 to April 2.

LaDuke’s brightly colored and richly patterned paintings on shaped wood panels celebrate Oregon’s agricultural bounty and the individuals who labor to grow and harvest it. To create these works, the artist spends many hours in the fields sketching and connecting with migrant workers on Southern Oregon farms, vineyards and orchards. Later, in the studio, LaDuke transforms her sketches into energetic imagery that dignifies the migrant farm workers and their important labor.

Throughout LaDuke’s long artistic career she has created artwork inspired by the experiences of women, agrarian workers and tradespeople, and by folk art traditions, in places around the world. Writes curator Bonnie Laing-Malcolmson: “Her work asks the viewer to value and celebrate the beauty of other cultures, while recognizing humanity’s enduring hardships.” In “Bountiful Harvest,” the artist turns our attention to the lives of people closer to home—to the Latinx farmworkers who harvest Southern Oregon’s fertile lands. The works in the exhibition also can be found in the artist’s publication, “Bountiful Harvest: From Land to Table,” published in 2016 by White Cloud Press.

Born in the Bronx, New York, to Russian and Polish immigrant parents, LaDuke’s artistic training began at age 9 while attending the Workers Children’s Camp (Wo-Chi-Ca), under the tutelage of art program directors and African American artists Charles White and Elizabeth Catlett. By her teen years she was sketching stylized portraits of street vendors in New York City. Scholarships in the early 1950s brought LaDuke to the
University of Denver, the Cleveland Institute of Art and the Instituto Allende in San Miguel, Mexico. Her time in Mexico, where she met Mexican modernists Rufino Tamayo, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, and was first introduced to indigenous cultures, was a formative period. Back in the United States, LaDuke began to teach while continuing her studio practice, and in 1963 completed her master’s degree in printmaking at California State University (Los Angeles). In 1964 LaDuke moved to Oregon, accepting a position in the art department at Southern Oregon University (SOU) where she taught for 32 years.

Throughout LaDuke’s career, she has published films, articles and books, lectured and presented across the United States and internationally, and published her artwork on book and journal covers, while continuously developing and extensively exhibiting new work around socially-engaged multicultural themes. LaDuke has received numerous awards and special recognition for her artwork, scholarship, philanthropy and dedication to justice, peace and social change. These include the Oregon Governor’s Arts Award in 1993 and the 2019 Oregon Arts Medallion presented by the Oregon Center for the Arts at SOU. Regionally, her artwork can be found in public collections such as the Portland Art Museum, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (Eugene), Oregon State University (Corvallis), the Hallie Ford Museum of Art (Salem), Schneider Art Museum (Ashland) and SOU, and permanent displays including one at the Rogue Valley International Airport (Medford). A retrospective exhibition featuring the breadth of LaDuke’s artistic work was first mounted at the Schneider Museum of Art in 2013, and has also traveled to the Brauer Art Museum, Valparaiso University (Valparaiso, Indiana), the Coos Art Museum (Coos Bay) and elsewhere. LaDuke’s current work centers around issues related to borders, immigration and social justice, both in her “Bountiful Harvest” series and in the circulating exhibition portfolio “Social Justice Revisited: Remembering, Reliving, Resisting.”

The Art in the Governor’s Office Program honors selected artists in Oregon with exhibitions in the reception area of the Governor’s Office in the State Capitol. Artists are nominated by a statewide committee of arts professionals who consider artists representing the breadth and diversity of artistic practice across Oregon, and are then selected by the Arts Commission with the participation of the Governor’s Office. Only professional, living Oregon artists are considered and an exhibit in the Governor’s office is regarded as a “once in a lifetime” honor. Artists whose work has previously been shown in the Governor’s office include Henk Pander, Michele Russo, Manuel Izquierdo, James Lavadour, Margot Thompson, Gordon Gilkey and Yuji Hiratsuka.

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The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of Business Oregon (formerly Oregon Economic and Community Development Department) in 1993, in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the Commission’s expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development.

The Arts Commission is supported with general funds appropriated by the Oregon legislature and with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust. More information about the Oregon Arts Commission is available online at: www.oregonartscommission.org.