



For immediate release

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### **New Work by Claire Burbridge Installed at Western Oregon University's Natural Sciences Building**

Salem, Oregon -- A new series of works by Ashland artist Claire Burbridge that explores the balance and cycles of natural ecosystems has been acquired for Western Oregon University's (WOU) Natural Sciences Building through Oregon's Percent for Art in Public Places Program.

The commissioned works include two intensely detailed, largescale pen, ink and pigment pencil drawings; a custom wallpaper; and additional smaller drawings and intaglio prints. Burbridge's series of works conveys her understanding of the underlying balance and cycles of undisturbed natural ecosystems, and draw attention to the mysteries of the physical world.

"Homeostasis" incorporates forms that represent the progression of evolution of life on Earth according to Charles Darwin's 'Tree of Life' concept: from a single cell to intelligent life. In "Quintessence," Burbridge explores the elements of earth sciences through a myriad of observable natural occurrences from density and void to geology and black holes. The spine-like central motif was derived from looking at a piece of fulgurite (lightning sand glass) created by the caldera-forming eruption of Mount Mazama. Burbridge's custom-designed wallpaper "Tree Mural," which explores the subject matter of saprophytic organisms, fungi and mycelia, accents the entry lobby lounge as well as the series of drawings and prints that connect the corridors of the Natural Sciences Building.

Originally built in 1968 to serve WOU's chemistry department, the Natural Sciences Building was recently renovated to transform the outdated building into a facility that will meet the needs of and advance the Natural Sciences program at the University. Led by FFA Architecture and Interiors, Inc., the renovations included improvements to

labs, teaching and support spaces; establishing new learning spaces to enhance the functions of the building as an academic setting; and universal accessibility upgrades.

Guided by Oregon's Percent for Art Statute, an art selection committee was assembled to consider the most appropriate artwork for the building, which houses fields of study in the natural sciences: biology, geology, earth and physical sciences. Through a competitive process, the selection committee--comprised of WOU faculty, staff, the project architects and local arts professionals and was managed by Ryan Burghard of the Arts Commission--selected Claire Burbridge to create a series of visually and conceptually connected artworks that introduce a passage of time and a sense of visual evolution.

"This commission felt tailor-made for my previous artistic inquiry and has introduced me to new and fascinating subject matter," said Burbridge. "I have just spent the most enjoyable and satisfying year of my work life thus far. This commission encouraged me to push my practice as an artist."

The artworks are located in the west entry lobby, stairwells and the connecting corridors of WOU's Natural Sciences Building in Monmouth, Oregon (345 Monmouth Ave. N).

### **Oregon's Percent for Art Program**

Oregon was one of the first states in the nation to pass Percent for Art legislation, placing works of art in public spaces throughout the state. Since then, the Percent for Art program has maintained a commitment to the placement of permanent art of the highest quality in public places. Committees of local residents across Oregon make selections. The overall collection enhances the state's public spaces and contributes to our well-recognized quality of life.

### **Oregon Arts Commission**

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: [www.oregonartscommission.org](http://www.oregonartscommission.org)

### **Western Oregon University**

Western Oregon University is a public, mid-sized university - committed to changing lives, strengthening communities and transforming our world. Located in Monmouth, the heart of Oregon's lush Willamette Valley, WOU is about 20 minutes from Salem, the state's capital and about 75 minutes from Portland, the state's cultural hub.

At Western Oregon University, Every Student Matters.