Diverse Oregon Communities
Inspire Local Creative Projects
At the High Desert Museum in Bend, the Art Through Ancestry exhibit included material from the museum’s Doris Swayze Bounds collection selected by artists Rick Bartow, Part Courtney Gold and Lillian Pitt to trigger connections to their Native American heritage. Photo: High Desert Museum

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On the Cover: Visual artist Ann Kresge of Salem within the multimedia installation, Healing Forest, a piece created in collaboration with Mike Nord which combined printmaking, sculpture, video, electronic music and found objects. The work was a meditation on healing, community and nature created after a serious illness and installed at Project Space II, a non-commercial art space sponsored by Salem Art Association. Project Space has occupied empty commercial spaces in downtown Salem every summer since 2008. Photo: Barbara Rowland
Diverse Oregon Communities
Inspire Local Creative Projects

For almost fifteen years, the Oregon Arts Commission’s Arts Build Communities grant program, with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, has supported efforts that incorporate the arts as a means to building stronger communities. In 2009, that support totaled $101,775 in grants to 19 projects across the landscape of Oregon.

ABC projects provide vital connections between the arts and other aspects of Oregon life: health and healing, downtown revitalization, engaging youth, marking community spaces and honoring local traditions. They reflect the vitality of the arts in towns and cities across the state.

• In Bend, the High Desert Museum opened its Doris Swayze Bounds collection to a trio of noted Native American artists who used the works as inspiration for their own creative expressions.
• In The Dalles, high school students learned about art and science as they developed quilt designs which became the basis of local public art.
• In Salem, area artists came together to create and display new works of art in a shared space in the downtown core.
• In southern Oregon, artists interacted with scientists from the National Center for Conservation Science and Policy in a forum that created a dialogue around climate change.
• In Hood River, a new effort presented performers that audiences from small Columbia Gorge communities might not have otherwise had the opportunity to experience.
• In Grants Pass, a project to celebrate Oregon’s 150th birthday used historic images to inspire new work by Oregon writers and visual artists.

These projects and others reveal the power of the arts and artists to make communities stronger, livelier and richer. But Arts Build Communities projects are not created in isolation. They succeed because thousands of Oregonians in communities across the state volunteered their time, muscle, money and expertise. Arts Commission funds were matched by more than $787,428 in revenues from other sources, most of them local. Another $308,428 plus was contributed in in-kind support from local companies and individuals.

Oregon’s arts are touchstones of community, essential to quality of life. They help us understand the commonalities that lie beneath our surface differences. They teach us that community is as diverse as the texture and color that comprise the vibrant quilt of Oregon art and culture.

Christine D’Arcy
Executive Director

Keys to Success in Arts Build Communities Projects

While each Arts Build Communities project is distinct and individual, there are common indicators of successful projects:

• A strong organization behind the project: skilled and experienced staff; specialized expertise; structure; support; volunteers
• Demonstrated need in the community
• Realistic and creative goals that respond to those needs: e.g., access to art or other services; economic development; education (arts or other); cultural understanding
• Planning and preparation
• Sufficient time and resources to do the job right
• A connection to the spirit of the community and its residents
• Participation (physical and financial) by community partners: media, business, schools, government, service organizations, funders
• A practical way to assess progress and results
• High quality art and a high quality experience for participants
Artist Pat Courtney Gold tells a story about her grandmother, a member of the Wasco tribe, who would dress in her best-beaded moccasins and wampum necklace and every three years go Hereford bull shopping. “She had a cute little giggle,” said Gold. “She’d say, ‘I’m getting all dressed up!’ She’d laugh and her gold tooth would sparkle.”

That memory of a gold tooth’s twinkle found its way in a basket Gold created for the High Desert Museum’s Art Through Ancestry exhibit in Bend. Gold and two other highly respected Native American artists, Rick Bartow and Lillian Pitt, were invited by the museum into the archives of the Museum’s Doris Swayze Bounds collection of Columbia Plateau artifacts in an effort to trigger connections to their heritage and find inspiration for new work.

For Gold, the Museum’s vault held an abundance of possible inspirations but she finally settled on a few items: A Tlingit basket with bear and salmon images (her father was Tlingit), a small necklace and an elaborately adorned Crow dress. Woven into each of Gold’s baskets, these inspirations become geometric forms depicting faces, salmon and waterfowl of the Columbia River. A small smiling petroglyph face reminded Gold of her grandmother’s shaped forehead—a distinctive profile resulting from the traditional Chinook (of which the Wasco are a part) practice of flattening a baby’s forehead by use of a cradleboard. That memory found its way into Gold’s gold-toothed basket created for the exhibit.

However, not all inspiration came from the physical artifacts in the collections. When artist Rick Bartow heard the story of Roger Bounds, son of the collection’s benefactor, Portland banker Doris Swayze Bounds, he knew he’d found the jumping off point for his own artwork. Through his family’s ties to the native community, the younger Bounds forged a relationship with a “medicine man” who held a protection ceremony for the young fighter pilot before leaving for his tour of duty in Vietnam. As Bartow (also a Vietnam veteran) recalls the story, “Twice in his tour of duty he was in terrible danger and both times that remarkable bond that had been established with the medicine man had been broken. The medicine man knew, and was very agitated, and had to reestablish that connection immediately.”

In his painting, “For Roger,” the penetrating gaze of a shaman looks over the shoulder of a hawk that Bartow says represents Roger Bounds as a soldier in Vietnam. Rich browns, reds, and turquoise recall traditional baskets, beadwork, and the Oregon landscape in a work that draws from Bartow’s ancestry but with brushstrokes and energy in line with the major forces of American modern art.

“All the items struck a strong sense of pride for all the excellent workmanship of every piece,” says the third participant in the show, internationally known multimedia artist Lillian Pitt, who contributed four pieces for the show. “I wished for stories from the makers but knew that these makers were not boast- ers or proudful of their work. This is the way of our people. This was taught to me at a young age and I was reminded of it when I saw the collection. There is no Native word for ‘Art,’ we make items that are useful or for our loved ones with love in our hearts.”

Exhibited along with their items of inspiration, the newly created work takes on a richness of meaning that may not have been there without the connections made by the artists to the artifacts.

“Art Through Ancestry educated visitors on Native American cultures of the High Desert and its neighboring areas, both past and present day, showing that they are very much alive,” said the Museum’s President, Janeanne Upp, of the impact of the exhibit seen by nearly 60,000 visitors. “It broadened our reach as an institution as well with layered learning—artifacts,
Art Through Ancestry

Art Through Ancestry was a project that opened the archives of the High Desert Museum to three contemporary Native American artists who found inspiration for their own artistic creations. Exhibited together, the new and old works showed visitors the continuation of Native artistic traditions.

The response to Art Through Ancestry was so positive that the Museum plans to place Pitt, Bartow, and Gold’s work on permanent display in the Hall of Plateau Indians where the Bounds collection is exhibited, and to add an arts education component to all future Museum exhibits.

As for the artists, the exhibition gave them a chance to add to the artistic conversation of a culture that is alive and well.

“I think these types of shows are very important as they show an ancient culture that has not died out or ‘vanished,’” explains Pitt. “We are still here creating work in our own medium, with the same care and consideration; to do the best we can to honor our ancestors.”

Honor them, they did—gold teeth and all.

Above and below: The Art Through Ancestry exhibit included material from the High Desert Museum’s Doris Swayze Bounds collection selected by artists Rick Bartow, Part Courtney Gold and Lillian Pitt to trigger connections to their Native American heritage. Photos: High Desert Museum

**Project**

Art Through Ancestry

**Organization**

High Desert Museum

**Principal Partners**

The Museum at Warm Springs, Arts Central, Bend-La Pine Schools

**Why It Worked**

Opened the archives of the High Desert Museum to three contemporary Native American artists who found inspiration for their own artistic creations. Exhibited together, the new and old works showed visitors the continuation of Native artistic traditions.
During the summer of 2009, Project Space II, a temporary art venue featuring the work of selected artists from the mid-Willamette Valley, was installed on the vacant lower floors of the historic Capitol Center in downtown Salem. The space became a contemporary art laboratory sited among the empty teller windows, massive bank vault, and impossibly shiny marble floors.

“We’re going to have a two- or three-ring circus of arts events,” said Rich Harcourt, interim director of the Salem Art Association, before Project Space II’s official opening. And while dancing elephants and clowns failed to appear, Project Space II succeeded in filling the empty space with a series of thought-provoking installations and displays that increased the dialog between the community and the artists.

“Projects like Project Space add an element that Salem does not already have,” explains Salem Art Association’s Community Arts Education Director, Kathleen Dinges of Project Space, in its second year. “[It is] a place to talk to artists about new work, a place to view contemporary, new and experimental art work, a place for discussion and interaction of ideas. Project Space is a place that offers opportunities for artists to try new things. It is a non-commercial venue. This is very unique in Salem, both for artists and for residents and visitors to participate in.”

By offering a non-profit, non-commercial, juried space for more than 45 artists, Project Space II contributed to the vision for the cultural community included in the broad themes of the City of Salem’s Vision 2020, a blueprint for the future of Salem. In it, the city hopes to “Create a vibrant destination. This theme includes actions like more restaurants and shopping, later hours, performing arts venues and live music, more public art and promotion of local artists.”

“Artists are part of our economy,” says Dinges. “Engagement among artists and with community is an essential part of the endeavor.”

Interaction between artists and the community was at the core of Project Space II’s mission and carried out in creative ways. In a clever response to the bank environs, artists Sean Regan, Rachel Hibbard and Cara Tomlinson of Bin Labs collaborated on an exhibit specifically designed to happen in the bank space. The artists created a location where community members could bring an object to “deposit,” including filling out a requisite deposit slip. At the end of Project Space II, the depositors were able to “withdraw” their object with value added (a child’s toy truck is returned to its owner covered in blue glitter; a plastic heart is surrounded by red mesh and given a key). Owners then completed a withdrawal slip conveying their thoughts about whether or not the object increased or decreased in value.

Artists not only interacted with the community, but with the space as well. One site-specific piece that addressed local concerns was a piece by artist Cynthia Herron who commemorated the Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge south of Salem by creating “stained-glass” out of plastic bags and painter’s tape. Light will shine through the transparent plastic and echo the effect of stained glass in Gothic cathedrals. In all of my landscapes, I seek to bring people, nature and art together. This will be an extension of that, focusing on the importance of reusing our resources and protecting our local wild areas.”

Installation by artist Bonnie Hull, one of the artists involved in Project Space II, summer 2009.

Artist Cynthia Herron created work for Project Space’s four east-facing arched upstairs windows. “They are reminiscent of the three large recessed arches upstairs in Dr. Barnes’ museum in greater Philadelphia, where he commissioned Matisse to paint his mural, ‘Dance’. I aim to use these windows, these associations, recycled materials and bold simple colors to commemorate one of our local natural scenes: Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge south of Salem … using only layers of colored plastic bags and painter’s tape. Light will shine through the transparent plastic and echo the effect of stained glass in Gothic cathedrals. In all of my landscapes, I seek to bring people, nature and art together. This will be an extension of that, focusing on the importance of reusing our resources and protecting our local wild areas.”
only one segment of the Project Space II experience, the other involved on-site artist studios open to the public. In the light-filled mezzanine, artists worked among other artists and in view of visitors who could get an up-close view of the artists' processes. "Viewing the artmaking process can be informational, educational, insightful, interesting, engaging. New ideas come from interaction between artist and community members," says Dinges who also underscores the importance of artists working amongst each other. "Artists are very appreciative of the opportunity to both participate in creating work in a larger space and collaboratively, as well as view everything that happens at Project Space," she says.

In all, over 2,000 visitors experienced Project Space II, more than double the number of visitors for the first Project Space in 2008.

"There has been very positive feedback from both artists and the community, to the extent that the project is continuing due to demand, rather than staff initiative," says Dinges who reports that the City of Salem is working even more closely with the Art Association on future endeavors.

As for the circus, in early 2010 Project Space III began its high wire act in a third location in Salem continuing their tradition of arts engagement in nontraditional venues.

_CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WORK WAS INSTALLED IN EVERY ASPECT OF THE FORMER BANK SPACE INCLUDING THE VAULT, ENTERED THROUGH ITS ROUND DOORS AT THE REAR OF PROJECT SPACE II. ARTIST SUSAN TRUEBLOOD STUART WITH A SERIES OF WATERCOLORS DOCUMENTING THE EMOTION AND STRUGGLE OF DEALING WITH ILLNESS. PAINTINGS BY PROJECT SPACE II JUROR ROYAL NEBEKER INSTALLED IN THE ENTRY FOYER OF PROJECT SPACE II. ALL PHOTOS: BARBARA ROWLAND._

**PROJECT**
“Project Space II”

**ORGANIZATION**
Salem Art Association

**PRINCIPAL PARTNERS**
City of Salem, property owner Roger Yost, Willamette University, Chemeketa Community College, Western Oregon University, artists from Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties.

**WHY IT WORKED**
Creating a space where contemporary art and artists interact with the exhibition space, the public, and each other creates a lively dialog that enhances the city as well as its citizens.
Hood River may be a scant 63 miles from Portland, but when it comes to attracting live performance to this scenic town, the distance might as well be to the moon and back. While Portland and Seattle have the populations of ticket buyers to support performances of national and international artists, not everyone has the means or the opportunity to travel from Hood River and its surrounding areas to participate in cultural events.

In response, the Columbia Center for the Arts’ CCA Presents… brings a series of vibrant arts programs in Hood River as a way to, as they wrote in their Oregon Arts Commission Art Builds Community grant application, “expand our horizons to ideas, traditions, and cultures beyond what we see everyday in the orchards and small communities of the Gorge.”

Situated in the heart of downtown Hood River, the Columbia Center for the Arts was formed in 2003, with the mission to become the town’s focal point of art by using its gallery and performance spaces to connect arts with the community. After a period of public input and consideration of what types of programming the community desired, the Center hired a part-time coordinator in 2008 and put together a 12-month performance schedule that included the highest requests from their audience. Top on the list of requests: a variety of genres with a focus of what is not available in Hood River or the Columbia River Gorge area. Another consideration guided their programming decisions, namely engaging segments of the population that might not otherwise attend an art event, including the elderly and school-aged children.

In 2007, the Center presented two events in its inaugural CCA Presents… and by 2009, with additional funding from the Arts Build Communities grant, the Center expanded programming to include dance performances, lectures, and music. Over 1,500 people participated in CCA Presents… performances and workshops in 2009 drawn by the broad range of genres reflecting the cultural and geographic diversity and history of the region that is nearly 30% non-white. One event, “Sentimental Journey,” evoked the large Japanese-American community that once lived in Hood River before WWII. “Sentimental Journey” combined live jazz performance with former Oregon Poet Laureate Lawson Fusao Inada’s memories of hearing jazz in WWII internment camps and how this influenced his life and work. Other CCA Presents… events included photographer and historian Carole Glauber’s lecture on women photographers working in Oregon from 1852 to 1917 and a presentation and reading by the authors of “Cataclysm on the Columbia,” award-winning book about an early controversy surrounding Oregon’s geology.

Many CCA Presents… events included an outreach program that enriched the experience of the audience, including two master classes for Columbia Gorge Dance Academy students lead by the professional dancers of BodyVox 2 from Portland. The master class allowed the young dancers to study alongside professionals for the first time. Everyone who took the class came to the sold-out BodyVox 2 show and the Dance Academy Company dancers performed as guest artists during the performance. “It was a win-win,” recalls the Center’s Executive Director, Joanie Thomson. Another outreach, a partnership with Columbia Gorge Arts in Education and Columbia Gorge Music Series, brought concert rock violinist Aaron Meyer for a multi-day residency in Hood River - and The Dalles-area middle schools leading up to the public concert at the Center.

As the popularity of the series grows, Hood River’s reputation as a performance destination has grown as well. By “putting Hood River on the map,” says Thomson, “we are now contacted on a consistent basis by quality performers,” ranging from African dance and drumming to independent filmmakers looking for a public venue.

Success is a boon not only for Columbia Arts, but also for the economic health of Hood River’s historic downtown core. “Since we’re located in the heart of
downtown, many people do various things outside of our location before and after the events,” says Thompson. “I have heard over and over, ‘We just came from dinner at such-and-such restaurant before the show,’ or, ‘I would like to buy my ticket now and come back after I shop at such-and-such store.’ The Center maintains strong partnerships with the Hood River Chamber and Downtown Business Association, including a plan to expand the programs and playbills to CCA Presents… events, offering a stronger tie-in and more impact with local businesses. Because of their visibility downtown, Thompson says the Center often plays the role of a downtown visitor’s center handing out maps and making restaurant recommendations.

It’s all in a day’s work for an arts organization that thrives on a synergistic relationship between the community, businesses, visiting artists, schools, and government. Such relationships fulfill economic and cultural promises by creating a strong social fabric that ultimately makes Hood River a lively artistic destination. That, as they say, is truly a win-win.

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**Project**
CCA Presents…

**Organization**
Columbia Center for the Arts

**Principal Partners**
The Gorge Music Series, BodyVox, Columbia Gorge Dance Academy, Portland-based dance company AWOL and downtown Columbia Gorge businesses.

**Why It Worked**
A concert space dedicated to a diverse performance series not only increases accessibility to cultural activities for Hood River residents but adds to the town’s vibrant downtown core.
A quilt is the sum of its diverse parts stitched together to create a whole—a fitting design for a project that involved high school students, teachers, artists, businesses, and city government.

At The Dalles Wahtonka High School, art teachers Peny Wallace and Robyn Johnson wanted to find a project that would engage 75 ninth- through twelfth-graders in a meaningful art experience. Their goal: increasing student understanding and pride in their community through the arts. The decision was made to work in a new medium for the students: glass. “The Northwest has become such a hot spot for glass arts and we have so many amazing glass artists in our area,” Johnson told the Wahtonka school newspaper during the project that involved over 1,000 classroom hours.

Students first studied the heritage of The Dalles and Wasco County and its symbols by making field trips to culturally rich sites, studying artifacts, utilizing books published by local authors, and viewing films. “The students brainstormed what was important in their community, families, to them,” says teacher Wallace. “They explored symbols from the past, the present, and the future.” These investigations illuminated the rich history of Wasco County, an area that once served as an encampment for Lewis and Clark but more recently has been marked by high unemployment, high poverty levels and few cultural opportunities for area youth. (A bright spot for the area came in 2006 with the arrival of another pioneer, internet giant Google that moved its data center to a facility along the banks of the Columbia River.)

Versed in the symbolic language of their community, the students incorporated imagery such as salmon, petroglyphs, local flowers and fruit orchards into designs for 100 7-inch-square glass tiles that would compose “The Glass Quilt.” Local glass artist and educator Linda Steider, in collaboration with Columbia Gorge Arts in Education, assisted with the development of the project and lead a workshop on fusing glass in order to give the students a primer on working with glass.

This new medium proved tricky and students learned the assets and liabilities of both fusing glass (where glass pieces are melted together) and glass casting (where glass is melted in a kiln within a clay mold) with technical support provided from Nichol’s Glass in The Dalles and Bullseye Glass in Portland. Technical difficulties dogged the students who learned the fragility of glass the hard way when only 50% of their glass tiles surviving the first kiln firing process. “It was a good—but not always easy—learning experience to try again after a failure, to change and try another way or calculate a different firing temperature,” says Wallace. Yet the process required students to find solutions by consulting with professional artists and vendors, and perhaps more importantly to cooperate as a group in order to complete the bulk of project.

“All in all,” she says, “it was the classroom instructors and students who tested and came up with the correct firing process and casting process. It was a learning process that sometimes worked and sometimes needed to be changed. Overall, the project was a great lesson for students.”

Carmen Toll, executive director of The Dalles Art Center, runs her hand along the Glass Quilt now partially completed and installed outside the center. Students at The Dalles Wahtonka High School cast the initial glass panels that form the quilt. Future students will add to it. “It is a really cool concept. Always a changing piece of art - never boring, the same old thing,” says Toll. Photo: Sabina Samiee
Another added benefit of working with a medium as complicated as glass was its ability to be incorporated in other school subjects. “It’s nice to be able to include this arts learning into our curriculum because it incorporates science and math in the process,” said Wahtoka art teacher Johnson at the beginning of the project. Along with calculating firing temperatures, students learned to measure water volume in order to use the right amount of glass in their molds, and computed the dimensions of the installed quilt with all of its individual components.

As the quilt neared completion, students went before The Dalles City Council to present their ideas on selecting an installation site and to request that the quilt be situated in a public place. The courtyard at downtown’s The Dalles Art Center was determined as the best location and the piece (without the still-to-be-finished back) was installed outside the building by setting the glass pieces between cedar posts in metal channels resembling the color-blocked squares of a quilt.

Now that the quilt has been sited in a highly visible location at one of the town’s most established art centers, the research and artistic statements of The Dalles Wahtonka High students have contributed to The Dalles’ public art collection and to its cultural history as a result of taking art out of the classroom and into the world. “The Art Center is enjoying the Glass Quilt,” reports Wallace of the response. “With each change in the seasons its character comes alive with a variety of light.” With any luck, the Glass Quilt will live on as with any family heirloom to be enjoyed by future generations.

Students at The Dalles Wahtonka High School work on designs for elements of the Glass Quilt. The project’s overall goal was to connect students with the past and present using cultural symbols and to develop a partnership with community with a public art piece. Photo: Peny Wallace
Perceptions of the Past

Frozen Memories of Early Oregon Unlocked By Local Writers and Artists

Sepia-toned photographs contain much of what we know about Oregon’s early days: Workers lined up to have their picture taken with a giant tree they’ve just felled. A white-bearded man and a woman dressed in mourning clothes stand in front of their farmhouse. Mules pack supplies down a mountainside. These images give us a glimpse of life in 1850’s Oregon, but leave little to connect us with the past they represent. With help from some of Oregon’s most talented artists, the exhibition “Perceptions of the Past” mounted by Rogue Community College in Grants Pass and in partnership with Art Works attempted to interpret those photographs for a modern audience.

The idea was simple: select a historic photo of Oregon’s early days, send it to a writer to interpret, then pass that writing on to a visual artist to use as inspiration—but without the original photograph. Thirteen Oregon writers and thirteen Oregon visual artists took up the challenge of bringing one of thirteen images into the 21st century, and the resulting triptychs of archival photography, written word, and 2-D visual art made for some unexpected yet thought-provoking insights for the artists and viewers.

“Some the writing was such a direct translation of the image, the story in the image was definitely clear,” recalls Rogue Community College art professor and Perceptions co-curator, Tommi Drake. “There were others that were very interpretive. [Poet] Lawson Inada’s poem gave very little indication of the photo image yet [artist] Phyllis Yes created an image that definitely could have been from the original photo. I think it was the surprises in the written and visual interpretations that made the whole project so exciting.”

As a project to celebrate Oregon’s Sesquicentennial and to boost interest in Grants Pass and Josephine County as an arts destination, “Perceptions” engaged top artists and writers in Oregon—including two former Rogue Community College students as well as more well-known names such as Kim Stafford, Walt Curtis, and Monica Drake—working in a variety of genres to showcase the level of creative talent in the area and around the state. Archival photos from the Josephine County Historical Society depicted aspects of daily life of both Oregon’s settlers and the area’s native people, from a group of ladies at a spinning wheel to a lone figure on a precarious walking bridge.

When writer F.A. Nettlebeck received his photograph, an image depicting a horse-drawn logging wheel, he spent a “few days staring into the photo,” then wrote a short poem that touched on the environmental impact of logging—a foreign concept to these early loggers. “Whenever dealing with historical artifacts, there is always that sense of time travel. I wanted to reflect that in my poem, bringing it all back to ‘now time,’” said Nettlebeck. With allusions to the logging trade, memory, and the fleeting qualities of photography, artist Bruce Bayard had little trouble finding inspiration in Nettlebeck’s piece. “After reading F.A.’s poem, I thought that it seemed custom made to the flavor of art I make,” recalls Bayard of the process of creating his mixed-media print that featured a gnarled wheel in a pine forest. “All worries about whether I’d be...
able to make a respectable contribution faded away. I knew that I could create something that reflected the meaning of the words, and added to them. At the same time, the words challenged me and incited encouraging introspection.”

“Like Bruce, I was somewhat hesitant about how the whole thing would jibe but after seeing Bruce’s piece, I was filled with awe, it couldn’t have been more perfect,” recalls Nettelbeck. “He fired-up the time machine! Without sounding like a braggart, I think our collaboration came closest to what the organizers had in mind.”

“Our visitors to the gallery were extremely fascinated by the exhibit,” said organizer Drake. “They actually read many of the readings which is a contrast to exhibits with one artist statement that never gets read. The visitors enjoyed taking away a catalogue to then continue reflecting on the exhibit. Many returned to look again at the original photo and created image.”

Organizers scheduled a full slate of artist talks, readings, and workshops for the Rogue Community College and greater Grants Pass community. After its premiere at the FireHouse Gallery at Rogue Community College, some of the “Perceptions” exhibition pieces moved on to Home Valley Bank locations around Josephine County for view by the larger community. “Perceptions” has been displayed frequently at libraries, museums, and colleges throughout Southern Oregon with a total audience of approximately 7,500 viewers since 2009.

“The process opened my eyes to possibilities I had previously been reluctant to explore,” reflects painter Bayard of the experience. “While I’ve sometimes been inspired by poets’ words, or curious about historical images, I had never engaged with them in such a way as to feel part of the continuum.”

**Project**
“Perceptions of the Past”

**Principal Partners**
Art Works, Grants Pass Visitor and Convention Bureau

**Organization**
Rogue Community College

**Why It Worked**
Mutual inspiration among artists and writers brought to life images of Oregon’s early years in a unique exhibit that helped viewers connect with their pasts and their futures.
“Artists and scientists are the official ‘noticers’ of society... They notice things that other people either have never learned to see or have learned to ignore, and communicate those ‘noticings’ to others.” – Frank Oppenheimer, founder of San Francisco’s Exploratorium

Climate change seems to happen elsewhere—in the melting glaciers of Antarctica or shifting sand dunes in the deserts of the Southwest, but in the Rogue Valley, artists confronted the inconvenient truth of climate change in their own back yards.

It all began in early 2009 when Jefferson Nature Center director Susan Cross heard a presentation of findings from the report Preparing for Climate Change in the Rogue River Basin of Southwest Oregon. A dense, scientific analysis prepared by the Climate Leadership Initiative of the University of Oregon, the National Center for Conservation Science and Policy, and the Pacific Northwest Research Station of the USDA Forest Service, the report used climate change predictions in order to make specific findings relevant to the Rogue Valley. Cross knew that the information contained in the report should be shared with the community and citizens of the region, but how to distill the scientific jargon into digestible and thoughtful interpretations?

Shifting Patterns: Preparing for Unsettled Days connected seventeen local artists (most associated with Madrona Arts collective) with scientists from the National Center for Conservation Science and Policy in a forum that created a dialog about the information in the climate change report. Afterwards, the artists (a group that included writers, visual, craft, and performance artists) retreated to their individual studios to study and reflect on the report in order to create an artistic response.

A common reaction to the report: depressing. “It’s safe to say that all of us who read the report experienced grief for what will be and for what will be lost,” said participating artist Jan Pinhero who contributed a painting featuring the intersection of human and animal migrations. Artists grappled with expressing such alarming predictions as the loss of snowcaps on Mount Ashland to disappearing butterflies and other native flora and fauna. “Everyone admitted that they were flummoxed at the start,” said watercolorist and former ornithologist Barbara Massey. “But somewhere along the way finding a means of expressing an idea that satisfied both the criteria of the project and themselves.”

“I think many of the artists felt they were supposed to make things OK by being positive about the report as they worked on their interpretations,” says Cross. “But it isn’t a cheerful peek at the future—it is dire. So we had to move through some shock, grief, and a sense of mourning our place that was quite intense.”

Artists such as Ann DiSalvo created a comic book featuring a young girl that everyone calls “Shrimp” struggling in a humorous way to grab her multi-generational family’s attention regarding the environment. Pepper Trail and Jim Chamberlain collaborated on a book and website featuring poetry, photography, and scientific prose to express the myriad of changes outlined in the report. Songwriter Monte Killingsworth wrote lyrics that highlight the culture of excess and its detrimental effects: “Newer and faster/ Our culture’s built for speed/ Bigger and better/ That’s what we used to need.”

With the 16 projects completed, six public forums held at the Nature Center, Medford’s main library, Ruch Branch library in Applegate, and the Ashland library, allowed the artists to present their works to audiences that averaged 40 community members or more. Afterwards, Jefferson Nature Center’s facilitator, Jeff Golden, lead discussions about the concepts and ideas that came up for the audience and the artists. Shifting Patterns project was also featured at the Southern Oregon University Art Museum this spring as a part of a curated show on the State of Jefferson.

As the community engaged in a dialogue about climate change, so to did the artists reach out to each other. “I tried to create an atmosphere where the
By inviting artists to interpret a dense scientific study of the effects of climate change in the Rogue River Basin, “Shifting Patterns” inspired artists and encouraged community dialog about local ecological issues.
Snapshots

SUMMARIES OF ARTS BUILD COMMUNITIES PROJECTS

The Oregon Arts Commission awarded $101,775 through the Arts Build Communities grant program in 2008. Those funds supported 19 diverse projects, including the six showcased in this publication. On the following pages are capsule descriptions of the remaining projects. Comments are excerpted from reports and materials submitted by the grantee organizations.

ART ON ALBERTA / ART HOP

Seventeen blocks of Alberta Street, the heart of the Alberta Arts District in Portland, were filled with 20,000 visitors to the 10th annual Art Hop street festival, a community celebration that connected artists, musicians, neighbors, and business owners. Along with providing a one-day marketplace for artists from around the Northwest, Art Hop also highlighted Portland artist and dancer Thelma Johnson Streat (1911-1959) the first African-American woman to have her work exhibited by the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Up to 50 of Streat’s original works were exhibited in galleries along the route as visitors were invited to discover this acclaimed artist who counted Mexican muralist Diego Rivera as one of her collaborators and most ardent supporters. Stages and venues along Alberta Street hosted singer-songwriters, dance, and theater performances and children of all ages engaged in interactive art events in this gathering that highlighted the best of what Art on Alberta supports—past and future.

“The day’s events drew almost 20,000 participants to see Streat’s works displayed in five different venues, learn about her life, art, and objectives through articles, scrapbooks and artist trading cards...interact and engage in family-friendly arts and education-related fun in an all-inclusive street festival.” www.artonalberta.org

Art on Alberta’s Annual Art Hop street festival brings together artists, musicians, neighbors and local business owners in an annual community celebration. Photo: Heather Zinger
Snapshots: Summaries of Arts Build Communities Projects

CASCADE HEAD MUSIC FESTIVAL / JAZZ CONCERTS
Since its inception 23 years ago, the Cascade Head Music Festival in Lincoln City has brought world-class music to the central Oregon coast for three weekend festivals. In its early years, the programming included jazz, but over time, Cascade Head focused solely on classical music featuring international chamber musicians. After the departure of Cascade Head’s long-time artistic director Sergiu Luca in 2008, the festival board decided to revive the jazz component to the festival in an effort to appeal to a wider audience and add to the musical performance landscape of the area. In 2009, the festival invited jazz-fusion group Oregon, a band formed in the 1960’s in Eugene that combines elements of classical and improvisational jazz into their music. Their two evening performances capped a weekend of hands-on jazz music workshop at the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology led by Dr. Keller Coker of Western Oregon State University.

“This is the second year that the festival has produced jazz, and the first year, a new audience was drawn to the event. By producing jazz, we are appealing to residents and visitors who appreciate this genre of music, but may be less likely to attend a chamber music presentation.”

www.cascadeheadmusic.org

ESTACADA AREA ARTS COMMISSION / ESTACADA SUMMER CELEBRATION
Designing an art festival that appeals to multiple segments of the community is a tall order. In its ninth year, the Estacada Summer Celebration introduced new events in order to involve pre-teens and teenagers as well as the Spanish-speaking community of this small rural town. Teens explored historical and artistic landmarks around Estacada by following maps and solving clues in the festival’s version of the “Amazing Race.” Multiple art stations and music performances geared toward pre-teen and younger children provided a major draw for families. Printmaker Juan R. Fuentes demonstrated his process and presented his work at the Spiral Gallery, the first and only art gallery in Estacada. As a lasting reminder of each year’s celebration, the collective ArtBack Artists paints a mural-in-a-weekend during the festival featuring scenes of Estacada’s history and present, an annual project that has resulted in 16 full-sized murals around town.

“Our success in reaching a diverse cross-section of Estacada residents is because of the strong partnerships we’ve nurtured over the years, each bringing a different constituency to the event. There is something for everyone and this is one of the few times during the year that so many paths cross.”

www.EstacadaSummerCelebration.org
Snapshots: Summaries of Arts Build Communities Projects

Fishtrap / The Big Read
With a mission to “promote clear thinking and good writing in and about the West,” Fishtrap serves from their home in the northeast Oregon communities of Wallowa County, a large expanse of countryside with a population of 7,000. In a nod to the rugged and sometimes harsh environment of this part of the state, Fishtrap chose the Jack London classic, “Call of the Wild” for The Big Read, an annual NEA-sponsored event to increase literacy. Multiple events, discussion groups and movie screenings elaborated on London’s themes of canine devotion, wolf packs, and good old-fashioned adventure. Chosen, in part, because of its appeal to boys, the novel was taught in ten schools in Wallowa County with classroom teaching materials supplied by Fishtrap. A total of 1,500 people—20% of the county’s population—participated in the wide array of events, in-class lectures and demonstrations, essay contests, and free books for students, that invited readers of all ages to engage not only with literature, but also their community.

“We have a large number of amazingly committed volunteers, well-integrated social networks that create supportive synergy, and a community that is somewhat rabid in its zeal for cultural and social relief from the mid-winter doldrums.”
www.fishtrap.org

Neighborhood Pride Team aka Trillium Artisans / Training and Marketing for Low-Income Artisans
By harnessing the power of collective knowledge, the craftspeople of Trillium Artisans saw sales of their green crafts rise an impressive 225% in 2009. With funds from the Arts Commission’s ABC grant, Trillium worked with 37 underserved low-income craftspeople to strengthen their businesses through product reviews, monthly meetings, workshops and classes. Meetings covered everything from reaching customers through social media to creating a business identity in order to build economic independence for artisans. Crucial to success is technical knowledge for internet sales, the largest chunk of member sales. Marketing member products on popular sites such as Etsy.com and World of Good by eBay translated into sales increases of 111% over the same period last year. Business was so good that members were heard to say, “Recession? What recession?” Yet, the seeds of such good fortune are sowed with a great deal of care and planning in order to build these sustainable microenterprises.

“Trillium’s primary outcome is to increase artisan member crafts business sales income by 25%. Of 35 low-income artisans who have been Trillium members for longer than one year, 96% achieved a 25% increase in sales within the first year.”
www.trilliumartisans.org

Newport Symphony Orchestra / Symphony for Seniors
In response to local seniors’ desire for assistance with access to arts events and community activities, the Newport Symphony Orchestra (NSO) provided free and low-cost tickets for Symphony performances, transportation to concerts, lectures and relevant reading materials for the Newport Senior Center. Recognizing that some seniors have income and transportation or mobility challenges, the Symphony for Seniors program found simple—yet innovative—solutions to bring the arts to an audience of willing participants by erasing barriers faced by seniors. A total of fifty-three seniors attended at least one NSO concert under the program and of those, 40% had never attended a Newport Symphony concert before. The Symphony for Seniors program established partnerships between the Symphony and social service agencies, business groups, and the public library and will now serve as a model for future collaborations.

“This project will allow seniors, particularly low-income seniors, to reap the benefits of the premiere arts ensemble in Newport. Participation in this kind of activity helps keep seniors’ minds active, allows for social networking, decreases feelings of depression and isolation and allows them to avoid feelings of entrapment brought on by not being able to drive to the Newport Performing Arts Center themselves for such events.”
www.newportsymphony.org

Miracle Theater Group / BEAT and PUENTES Environmental Residencies
Teatro Milagro, the educational arm of Portland’s Miracle Theater Group, took up residency at three south and central Oregon schools bringing their special blend of bilingual art, theater and culture to these already diverse communities. Teatro’s two residency programs, PUENTES and BEAT, focused on environmental sustainability concerns from artistic and Latino point of view. Working with the integrated PUENTES curricula created by Teatro Milagro, Central Point’s Crater High School teachers and administrators engaged nearly the entire student population in the PUENTES program. 585 students and nine teachers (who taught nine different subjects) participated in projects ranging from building cob structures to creating sculptures out of recycled trash. In Prineville, a four-day BEAT (Bilingual Educator Arts Training) residency included creating an “ecodrama” with members of the Miracle Theater culminating in original scenes added to the troupe’s bilingual play, “El Último.” In all, approximately 4,500 students, teachers, and community members participated in the three residencies and resulting performances in Prineville and Central Point.

“All of the participating students and their teachers gained insight into global issues, environmental sustainability, cultural issues and scientific explorations. [They] were able to complete these arts-integrated learning projects and come to a greater understanding of how they could make the world a better place.”
www.milagro.org
Snapshots: Summaries of Arts Build Communities Projects

Oregon Children’s Theatre / DEEP (Discover Engage Explore Perform)

Through their DEEP (Discover Engage Explore Perform) program, the Oregon Children’s Theatre brought personalized theater classes and workshops to youth served by five social service agencies. Along with learning theater basics such as acting and script writing, students also received free tickets and backstage access to Oregon Children’s Theatre’s mainstage performances in order to experience live theater performed by a professional company.

The theatre provided on-site classes for more than 120 children served by members Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, Friends of the Children, St. Mary’s Home for Boys, and New Avenues for Youth. Their long-term relationships with these agencies helped them customize learning opportunities that best matched the interests and needs of each organization. At Friends of the Children (a non-profit that pairs high-risk children with long-term mentors), Oregon Children’s Theatre worked with students and their mentors on public speaking, a crucial life skill and source of empowerment for the students.

“A key to DEEP Theatre is that each partner agency receives customized services based on their particular interests and needs. Oregon Children’s Theatre works closely with partner agency staff to plan customized services to be delivered within the framework of the programming they offer to the youth they serve. Through these partnerships, we are able to target our services to underserved youth through organizations they already know and trust.” www.octc.org

Oregon Shakespeare Festival / Strengthening Connections to Latino Audiences

During the first forty years of its 75-year history, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival presented an exclusively Shakespeare season to nearly all-white audiences. Over the past thirty years, the festival has worked to include plays written, performed, and viewed by ethnically and culturally diverse groups. In response to the rapidly growing Latino population in southern Oregon, the past few years has seen Oregon Shakespeare setting ambitious goals to build connections with Spanish-speaking audiences. These initiatives included 960 free and discounted tickets to performances in 2009, increased in Latino performers at the festival’s annual Green Shows, year-round relationships with four Latino community partners including La Clinica del Valle and the Rogue Community College Latino Programs. The festival’s reach extends throughout the community and in 2009, they helped to organize, sponsor, and/or participated in 11 off-site events including providing financial and logistical support for Ballet Folklorico Ritmo Alegre’s annual show featuring traditional folk dances from Mexico. Not satisfied with anecdotal evidence that their outreach efforts have been successful, Oregon Shakespeare plans to work with a consultant in 2010 to help articulate goals and establish a baseline for measuring the impact of their outreach initiatives.

“These programs, plus year-round collaborations with five community partners, moved our outreach work beyond a one-week ‘banner event’ and introduced community dialogue and partnership-building as standard operating practice throughout the season.” www.osfashland.org

Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital Foundation / The Youthful Art of Healing

Working with glass artist Linda Steider in partnership with Columbia Gorge Arts in Education, high school students from White Salmon, Washington created glass tiles for a work entitled “Journey of Healing and Comfort, a Glass Quilt,” installed in the newest wing of the Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital. With funds from the Oregon Arts Commission, Steider led her students through exercises to expand their ideas of healing beyond Band-Aids and plaster casts and into diverse and expressive concepts that they then translated into glass art. Once the students’ tiles were completed, a local machine shop fabricated the Steider-designed steel backing and the piece was installed in the hospital. Guided by the idea of healing, the students’ glimmering glasswork adds a thought-provoking and energizing element to the hospital’s interiors.

“The students were very proud of their creations; many came to see the installed final piece during the community open house held in March. Students were able to show their family members their tiles and explain the process for developing them. Seeing such pride was heartwarming.” www.providence.org

Wallowa Valley Music Alliance / Community Concerts

During the warm summer evenings in Joseph and Enterprise, the Wallowa hills are alive with the sounds of classical, folk, rock, and jazz music. The Wallowa Valley Music Alliance presents three concerts per year in Wallowa County, all of which are free or presented for a nominal admission price. Their thirteen-week Courthouse Concert Series featured local and regional musicians performing evening concerts in Enterprise’s gazebo and averaging 90+ attendees (and that’s a lot of music fans considering there are 7,000 residents in the entire county). Other series included Tunesmith Night, a monthly songwriter showcase, and Occasional Concerts, a variety of other live music performances. The Alliance also partnered with the Wallowa Valley Arts Council and Wallowa Resources to present music showcases at their separate arts festivals in the area, and received funding in part from Wallowa County Board of Commissioners.

“The project strengthened the arts in Wallowa County by providing opportunities and venues for local musicians to perform and by introducing new music to our remote rural community with the performances by visiting artists.” www.wvmusicalliance.org
Snapshots: Summaries of Arts Build Communities Projects

WELL ARTS INSTITUTE / VOICES OF OUR ELDERS
Hampered by memory loss, physical ailments, and even reticence to talk about themselves, the memories and histories of the elderly frequently die when they die. Portland’s Well Arts Institute partners with elder care facilities bringing an 8-10 week memoir writing class to residents that not only assists the elders in writing and editing their stories, but also brings professional actors to perform selections from the writings for family, friends, and community members. One of the program’s innovations is addressing elders’ barriers to writing such as limited dexterity and memory loss. By providing one-on-one scribes who commit the storyteller’s words to paper, the program allows a lively interaction between the elder and specially trained facilitators who assist with prompts and other devises to help the elder recall stories from the past. At the conclusion of the program, participants are given a typed and bound copy of their own writing, adding to a sense of accomplishment and creating a lasting recorded history for the participant and their family.

“Performing these stories, paying the highest integrity to the voices of these long lives is a gift not all actors are bestowed. The joy our artists expressed was ultimately the experience of putting art into service. That is a strengthening of the arts and artists in our community.” www.wellarts.org

WRITE AROUND PORTLAND / CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS
Write Around Portland partners with 36 social service organizations to hold writing workshops for people with significant barriers to access to traditional literary arts programs. Among the 489 adults and young people participating in 47 eight- to ten-week Write Around workshops, there are veterans, inmates, homeless youth, adults living with traumatic brain injuries and many others of Portland’s most vulnerable populations. The workshops, lead by volunteer facilitators, nurture the participants’ need to express themselves, to tell their stories without fear of ridicule, and share a glimpse of their life with others in a setting that uses writing to help connect and learn from each other. All workshop attendees are invited to submit work for Write Around’s biannual anthologies. Three public readings—including the single largest of Write Around’s history in 2009 and attended by more than 300—increase the public’s understanding of the challenges faced by disadvantaged living among them.

“Write Around Portland excels because of a compelling mission, an exceptionally diverse, wide-reaching, and growing client base and data that clearly validates the success of Write around Portland program efforts toward transforming lives.” www.writearound.org

Arts Build Communities grants are available to nonprofits, schools, and local governments interested in building community through art. The program provides $3,000 – $7,000 grants for arts and community development projects in rural and urban under-served communities. To request an application or for information, contact the Arts Commission at (503) 986-0082 or visit www.oregonartscommission.org. FY2011 applications must be postmarked by October 1, 2010.