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NEWS RELEASE

Dec. 29, 2008

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MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS SHOWCASE AMERICAN INDIAN ART

MISSOULA—

Two exhibitions that feature American Indian artists will open Tuesday, Jan. 13, at the Montana Museum of Art & Culture, located in the Performing Arts and Radio/Television Center at The University of Montana.

“Fritz Scholder: Lithographs” will be on view in the museum’s Meloy Gallery. “Spirit Trails and Sky Beings: Mythical Scrolls of the Ojibway Nation” will be in the museum’s Paxson Gallery. The exhibitions will be at the museum through Saturday, March 7.

Scholder (1937-2005), a major influence for a generation of American Indian artists, was one-quarter Indian by birth. He was trained as a painter by Oscar Howe of South Dakota and Wayne Thiebaud of California and received a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Arizona. He then taught advanced painting and art history at the newly formed Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, N.M.

Disillusioned by the way Indians were portrayed in art, Scholder felt that the American Indian artist must step out of the arena of curios into the world of fine objects and expressive painting. In 1967 his new series of paintings depicting the “real Indian” became an immediate controversy. But Scholder soon received exceptional reviews for his poignant portrayals of the contemporary American Indian experience.

In 1970 Scholder was invited to the Tamarind Institute, the renowned lithography workshop in Albuquerque, N.M., to undertake its first major project after moving from Los Angeles. The lithographs on display at MMAC were created during his time at the institute and exemplify his iconic style.

“Spirit Trails and Sky Beings” features traditional stories on birch bark scrolls by Ojibway Richard LaFromboise (Miskomin).

Through an elaborate series of symbols called pictographs, birch bark scrolls serve as memory aids to tell traditional Ojibway stories that teach lessons about morals and values to Ojibway children, as well as adults. The traveling exhibition is a significant step in the preservation and continuation of the tradition.

Miskomin said, “Storytellers are intercessionaries of knowledge and spirits. They believe that we are infinite people, but from time to time we are inspired by other forces that expand our knowledge. Inspiration can come like a wind or whisper, a voice or a dream.”

“Spirit Trails and Sky Beings” is a project of the North Dakota Council on the Arts and is touring under the auspices of the Montana Art Gallery Directors’ Association. The exhibition is booked through the North Dakota Art Association and supported by a grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Community Folklife Program.

MMAC will present a gallery talk in conjunction with the exhibitions titled “Multiple Impressions” at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 22, in the Masquer Theatre, located in the PAR/TV Center. The talk, by UM anthropology Professor Emeritus Tom Foor, is free and open to the public.

MMAC gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 4 to 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. There is no charge for admission, and free parking is available near the northwest corner of the PAR/TV Center.

For more information, call 406-243-2019 or go to the museum's Web site at

<http://www.umt.edu/montanamuseum>.

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NOTE TO MEDIA: Digital images of selected artworks included in these exhibitions are available by request. Call Becky Garner, MMAC coordinator of programs and publications, at 406-243-2019 or e-mail rebecca.garner@mso.umt.edu.

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