

HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

Call for Artists

The High Desert Museum seeks an artist or artist team for the creation of a new art installation at the Museum. This installation will be situated at the entrance of the renovated permanent exhibition on the Indigenous Plateau. Eligible artists will have deep knowledge of Indigenous Plateau worldview, values, and knowledge and experience working with materials suitable for a long-term installation.

Commission & Budget

The anticipated art budget for the project is \$80,000 total. Budget includes artist fees, travel expenses, materials, engineering, permitting, fabrication, installation, insurance, and any other project costs. The High Desert Museum will support with the installation and integration of the artwork. This project is funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

About the Project

Since 2019, a project team consisting of an intertribal advisory group and High Desert Museum staff have come together to develop key themes, content, and design for the renovation of a 4,500-square-foot exhibition. The core theme of the new exhibition is the Lighted Earth, which is the foundation of the Indigenous Plateau worldview. This worldview recognizes how the light returns with the winter solstice and moves across the landscape, giving life to all the plants, animals, earth, people, and everything in their proper order. Each year, the light returns in this ongoing cycle of renewal. People are also filled with the light and part of this larger creational promise of continuity. As a result, we are all connected and have a responsibility to care for each other.

The new exhibition will convey this theme through several content sections, including the Annual Cycle, Traditional Knowledge, Restoration, Artistry, Intergenerational Learning, and Storytelling. The exhibition design reflects how Plateau people understand this place as vibrant, alive, dynamic, and lighted. Immersive storytelling, Native voices, and vibrant imagery will ask visitors to turn on all their senses to experience a new way of seeing the world. We hope that broad audiences will leave the exhibition with a greater respect for who Plateau tribes are as a people and sovereign nations, a deeper understanding of their own relationship to the world around them, and knowledge and interest in supporting tribal-led initiatives and caring for the people, animals, plants, and landscapes around them.

Potential Themes, Values, and Goals for the Artwork

Situated at the entrance of the new exhibition, this art installation will serve as a critical anchor for an entire wing of the High Desert Museum. It will visually draw visitors to the exhibition and welcome them into an immersive experience that centers on Indigenous Plateau voices and knowledge. The installation will introduce visitors to the Lighted Earth worldview and connect to core themes in the exhibition by provoking a sense of awe for the world around us. Floor to ceiling windows and a stream present an opportunity to incorporate light and water into the installation.

The artwork could reflect one or more of the following themes.

- This region is the homeland of Plateau people. This could include incorporating unique designs, stories, materials, and other aspects of Indigenous Plateau cultures that are rooted in the landscapes of the Columbia River Plateau.
- Connections between the past, present, and future. This could include referencing the world before people based on Plateau knowledge about this region and how it was formed (references to Coyote Stories).
- The role of light as the giver of life to the plants, animals, landscapes, people, and everything and how through the light we are all connected and dependent on each other. This recognizes the reciprocal promise between Plateau people and this place alongside the responsibility of everyone to care for the world around them.

Art Location

The following images show where the new art installation will be situated. It will replace the tule reed tipi at the entrance and could be situated along one or multiple walls and/or the ceiling depending on the selected artist's concept. See *the appendix for a floor plan and dimensions of the space*.



Materials and Media

The selection committee is open to artwork in a range of media and materials, but the installation must be durable and suitable for long-term display in a high traffic area with significant light exposure. This is a 3D opportunity.

Selection Process

Members of the exhibition development team comprise the selection committee for this project, including Native advisors and High Desert Museum staff. The committee will review submitted qualifications and select artists for an interview process. Shortlisted finalists will participate in a virtual interview with the committee where they will discuss their past work, art process, and project approach. The committee strongly encourages artist teams that include emerging or early career stage artists alongside more established artists.

Selections will be made based on prior work of the artist(s). No concepts or proposals will be requested at this time. The following criteria will be used to select finalists.

- Demonstrated understanding of the Plateau worldview, cultures, and knowledge.
- Appropriateness of scale, material (including long-term durability), and style of past work as they relate to the project values/goals and site.
- Artistic and technical quality of past work.
- Demonstrated ability of the artist to successfully complete artwork with a project timeline, firm budget, and input from stakeholders.

Estimated Schedule

February 6, 2026	Updated RFQ deadline
Late February 2026	Finalists notified
March 2026	Finalist interviews
April 2026	Artist selection and contracting

How to Submit Qualifications

To be considered for this opportunity, please submit all required materials to the CaFE platform by 11:59pm Pacific Time on Friday, February 6, 2026:

https://artist.callforentry.org/festivals_unique_info.php?ID=16596

1. Artist Statement/ Statement of interest. Two-page maximum.

Describe your interest in this project and how your artwork and art-making process would be a good fit for the opportunity.

2. Resumé. Two-page maximum.

For teams, include resumes of each team member.

3. Up to 10 images of past work.

For questions about the project and the application process, please email Michelle Seiler at creatingtogether@highdesertmuseum.org.

About the High Desert Museum

The High Desert Museum opened in Bend, Oregon in 1982. It brings together wildlife, cultures, art, history, and the natural world to convey the wonder of North America's High Desert. The Museum is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, is a Smithsonian Affiliate, and was a 2021 recipient of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service.