



EXQUISITE GORGE PROJECT II: FIBER ARTS



THE EXQUISITE GORGE PROJECT: Introduction

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In 2022, as the pandemic slowly released its grip, The Exquisite Gorge Project II: Fiber Arts connected communities through expansive imagery, like a sculptural poem. This iteration of the Maryhill's iconic art-making project brought together 13 fiber artists and paired them with over 18 Community Partners, again using the Columbia River as a unifying element, exquisite corpse style. Throughout the year, artists worked closely with community partners and gave demonstrations, provided classes and workshops, lectures, and experiences with the often-underestimated media of fiber.



In 2019 Maryhill Museum of Art dusted off a 13.5-ton steamroller to press a 66-foot piece of paper over 11 carved and inked boards, each 4-feet by 6-feet, creating the original, The Exquisite Gorge Project. The resulting print was a beautifully integrated vision of over 220-miles of the Columbia River created by 11 individual artists and supported by their community partners.

Using fiber arts, the goal of The Exquisite Gorge Project II was to educate people on the wonder of fiber as an art form, an under-appreciated media, and to push artists to think and create in new ways. It was hugely successful in that new generations of artists learned how wool is shorn, combed, spun, woven, knitted, crocheted, felted, quilted, and wrapped to make ART.

The industrial age may have taken appreciation for the hand-made out of our vocabulary, but this Project reignited a whole new dialogue between our grandparents' functional goals and the next generation who will push beyond the functional. This project asked artists to expand their visual vocabulary in extraordinary ways. One artist used grasses collected from the banks of the river in their assigned section, another was inspired by 2,000-year-old Zapotec weaving traditions, and yet a third created new fiber-felting methods. These are only three of the thirteen highly creative artists who participated. If you can imagine a fiber technique, it may have been used in this 70-foot-long sculpture.

Nothing happens without collaboration and the sculpture was not the only artwork created in this Project! Community Partnerships developed between Maryhill Museum of Art, artists, and Communities. From Portland to Walla-Walla connections and collaborative creations grew as each project connected, challenged, changed, and culminated with a huge EVENT!! It was EPIC!!

This Project would not have happened without the resounding support of each Community Partner, the vision of several volunteers, and the imagination of the artists who said YES!! The following pages will give you a glimpse of the power of art in weaving together many communities into one.

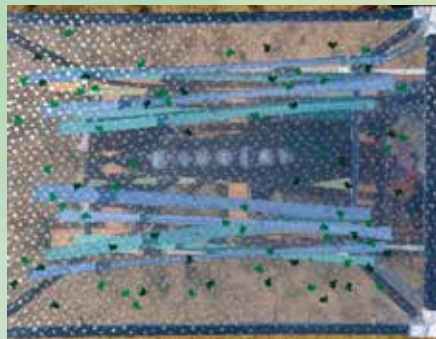
Please view the last page of this publication to see all those who did not hesitate to pack up sheep, author an article, take photos, design frames, build bases, create an activity, drive, drive, and drive more to make sure all the thousands of details equaled an extraordinary event. It takes a community, and we are grateful to everyone who will forever be part of The Exquisite Gorge Project community.

I present to you, **The Exquisite Gorge Project II: Fiber Arts.**

The goal was to educate people on the wonder of fiber as an art form.

FRONTISPIECE

Artistic Director,
Tammy Jo Wilson



Community Partner:
Art in Oregon, Oregon City, Oregon

Art in Oregon is an organization that fosters culturally rich regional communities through partnerships, advocacy, and investment in artists, businesses, educational spaces, and community spaces.

Artists: Tammy Jo Wilson and Owen Premore, Oregon City, Oregon

This iteration of The Exquisite Gorge Project could not have happened without the support of Tammy Jo Wilson and Owen Premore. With his skill as an exhibits designer, Premore designed the components from which the art of each section was framed.

As part of the Frontispiece, Premore's six-foot sturgeon hangs below a field of floating river plants and is surrounded by Wilson's prints of water plants found in the Columbia. A consummate fiber artist, Premore sewed the fish and crocheted the range of mountains along its dorsal ridge whose waters feed the Columbia and subsequently, the sturgeon!

As Artistic Director, Wilson problem-solved issues for the artists as well as bringing full-circle the printmaking from the first Project. Wilson's printed grasses circle us back to the original The Exquisite Gorge Project where she contributed to Section Two as a printmaker.

This Project owes a debt of gratitude to the skills and passion of this team.



Community Partners:
Oregon Society of Artists and Columbia Fiber Arts Guild, Portland, Oregon

Columbia Fiber Arts Guild is a vibrant guild dedicated to helping members explore all types of fiber art and provide spaces to meet and learn.

Oregon Society of Artists is dedicated to the education and nurturing of talent in the visual arts since 1926.

Artist: Lynn Deal, Portland, Oregon

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Fiber artist, Lynn Deal, was born in England, raised in New Mexico and spent much of her adult life in Oklahoma and Texas. Her interest in fabric and design dates back to her childhood and eventually brought her to the Pacific Northwest where she joined the Columbia Fiber Arts Guild.

Deal partnered with the Oregon Society of Artists teaching a class of Veterans on the technique of using fibers in layers to “paint” with material. This six-week class was extended due to its popularity and several of the veterans from the class contributed to the final sculpture.

Connecting this section to Maryhill was important to Deal, she placed a prominent “M” above the river as a metaphor for the origins of the Project.



Community Partner:
Lewis & Clark College, Portland, OR

Triplett worked with the Department of Art and Art History and the Department of Environmental Studies

Artist: Amanda Triplett, Portland, Oregon

Amanda Triplett is an installation artist whose craftwork, performance, and sculptural fiber objects predominately incorporate salvaged fibers. Triplett was one of the initial committee members and was an important part of designing the project.

Triplett worked with Lewis & Clark through an artist residency that explored fiber as a visualization of data and its graphic narrative of environmental concerns. She set up active experimentation with fiber and gave instruction on how to realize the story they wanted to share.

Students had field trips, presentations by outside climate organizations, and gathered fiber pollutants from the river, such as fishing lines and other materials used in the sculpture. The resulting sculpture reflected years of study on water temperatures and the impact climate change has had on the winds of the Columbia River Gorge.

The sculpture not only included the recycled fiber river and data sets in string and beads, but a topographical map reflecting the basalt story in fiber.

2



Community Partners:
**The History Museum of Hood River County
and Arts in Education of the Gorge**

The History Museum is a vibrant center for engaging all people in a better understanding of the community's heritage.

Arts in Education of the Gorge has a mission to enhance children's education through the arts in the school and community.

Artist: Chloë Hight, Hood River, Oregon

Chloë Hight is a thoughtful artist whose training in fiber arts literally has roots in the land itself. She works with sustainable materials, often gathered from her environment...from grasses to found materials that don't belong in nature. For Section Three, Hight gathered materials from along her section of the Columbia. As a framework for her sculpture, she used curved steel rods fabricated in collaboration with sculptor MacRae Wylde of Hood River to weave her river story.

Hight's section was impacted by the Eagle Creek fire. In addition to grasses, she hiked into the affected area and collected charred tree bark, ground them, and added wax and pine tar to create a paint for the wooden parts of her frame.

For her Community Partnerships, Hight worked with Hood River Middle School linking their studies of riparian zones with the materials used for making cordage ropes. She also gave an adult workshop on creating cordage ropes from found grasses.

3



Community Partners:
**Fort Vancouver Regional Libraries, White Salmon
 Community Library and White Salmon Arts Council**

The FVRL has a mission to strengthen communities through knowledge, experiences, and creativity.

White Salmon Arts Council promotes area artists and the arts through educational opportunities and art-inspired programs and events.

Artist: Xander Griffith, Vancouver, Washington

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Artist Xander Griffith is a felt artist that “invented” a method of rolling colorful felt fabric into bright and beautiful recognizable narratives. Quilling may be a borrowed technique from ancient paper rolling, but Griffith uses it in a unique way. His artworks are sculptural and tactile, which is why you may find it at the Portland airport in their sensory room.

For the EG2 project Griffith created a colorful and dynamic vision of the river that dares the viewer to touch it. Swirls of river waves capture fish while mountains gently roll toward rows of evergreens. His description of the river is visually captivating and irresistibly touchable.

Griffith worked with his partner, the White Salmon Library, to teach an online course in this beautiful technique thereby creating the next generation of quilling felt artists.



PHOTO CREDIT, FRIDERIKE HEUER



Community Partners:

**The Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Museum and
The Dalles-Wasco County Library**

The Dalles-Wasco County Library is a place for all ages. They provide multiple events, clubs, groups and services to the public.

The mission of the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Museum is to inspire stewardship of the Columbia River Gorge and Wasco County and to encourage active lifelong learning.

Artists: Laura and Francisco Bautista, Sandy, Oregon

Francisco and Laura Bautista are fourth generation weavers from Teotitlán del Valle, a Zapotec village in Oaxaca, Mexico. They came to Oregon and have been sharing their weaving traditions through workshops and demonstrations. When asked to participate in this Project, they didn't hesitate, excited to incorporate new themes and ideas into their traditions.

The Bautista family uses only hand spun and hand dyed wools, weaving with a foot pedal loom. They have taught their craft to their children. This fifth generation is reflected in the number of dots on each woven piece. This has become the family signature: four dots for the parents, five for the children.

The Bautista's section reflects the curve of The Dalles where they paid homage to the tapestry of people who have lived on this land: Indigenous People and those who came after. They pushed their craft in creating three-dimensional salmon, skimming their river-world of wool.

With excitement, the artists gave workshops at The Dalles-Wasco Library teaching weaving on a cardboard loom in both English and Spanish. They also brought their family loom, The Adventurer to The Discovery Center to give a demonstration and allow visitors to "dance on the loom."

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PHOTO CREDIT, FRIDERIKE HEUER

Community Partner:
**The Ft Vancouver Regional Libraries,
Goldendale Community Library**

The FVRL has a mission to strengthen communities through knowledge, experiences, and creativity.

Artist: Carolyn Hazel Drake, Portland, Oregon

Carolyn Hazel Drake approached this Project with extensive research about the history of the river that flows through this Section Six. She tells a story of nature, its constriction at man-made obstructions, and the eternal flow of birds who migrate with resilience. She tackled her story through the media of quilting and her signature ceramic details while capturing the beauty of the landscape's colors. Her color palette reflects a solemnity reflecting the loss of the Tribal people forced to relocate from their home. The triangular "geese" come and go in patterns of migration while the river's stones are reflected along the riverbank. She used Japanese Daiwabo fabrics, yarn-dyed before woven, with nuanced variations. Some are neutral, some are muted, and some are toned down, reminiscent of traditional Japanese colors.

In her partnership with The Goldendale Community Library, Drake gave a series of presentations giving viewers great insight to her process. She has inspired quilters to think expansively about nature as an influence in their art.

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Community Partners:
**American Romanian Cultural Society, Seattle, Washington and Maryhill
Museum of Art, Goldendale, Washington**

ARCS mission is to create social change through film, art and education. With a focus on Romanian heritage, we promote projects that build bridges between Eastern European cultures on the West Coast.

Maryhill Museum of Art ignites a journey of educational enrichment in the Columbia River Gorge by preserving and interpreting art and historic collections.

Artist: Magda Nica, Seattle, Washington

Magda Nica originates from Romania, making the perfect partner for Maryhill Museum of Art and the American Romanian Cultural Society. A Seattle-based painter and jewelry maker, Nica was excited to push herself using fiber as a media. Nica has deep roots in the beauty of Romanian textiles and brought to this Project antique materials from Romania.

She dreamed of Queen Marie, a benefactor of both Romania and Maryhill, who asked her to make a wedding dress. This became the inspiration for Section Seven as it flows like a dream past the Museum. Vintage Romanian lace represented the dam and bridges and yards of tulle represented the billowing clouds reacting to the ever-present winds, as in a dance.

Nica gave a presentation about the symbolism in Romanian embroidery and the opportunity to learn some embroidery stitches. Additionally, she gave a presentation to Maryhill's members about her sculpture inspiring everyone to try a new medium for their creativity.

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Community Partners:
Desert Fiber Arts, Kennewick, Washington
and The REACH Museum, Richland, Washington

DFA promotes participation in and appreciation for fine craftsmanship related to the fiber arts. They encourage the development and interest of the craft field within the arts, education, therapy, marketing, and the community. Each one, teach one.

The REACH Museum is an indispensable educational resource and premier cultural destination serving as a gateway for the understanding of the natural and cultural significance of the region, for present and future generations.

Artist: Ophir El-Boher, Marcola, Oregon

Ophir El-Boher is an apparel designer educated in multidisciplinary design at the Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology, and the Arts in Israel, where she grew up. She received her M.F.A. in Collaborative Design, Sustainable Fashion from Pacific Northwest College of Art. As a studio artist, a scholar, and a social activist concerned with social justice issues in general, she is focused on ethical-sustainable models of fashion.

She was perfectly paired with the Community Partner, Desert Fiber Arts in Kennewick, Washington. This community of creators embraced the concept of sustainability and collegiality through a significant artist residency. El-Boher and the DFA taught each other new concepts, pushed design and materials in new directions, all the while sharing their new-found knowledge through demonstrations, lectures, and workshops for the community.

In their exploration, El-Boher and team imagined a revolving platform that reflected the natural world in their section, as well as the impact human hands have on the same environment. Materials were gathered from the land, both natural and man-made, and woven into a narrative of the river, past and present. These revolved around a central rod through wind power.

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Community Partners:
The Confederated Tribes of the
Umatilla Indian Reservation and
Tamástslikt Cultural Institute

Tamástslikt is the only museum on the Oregon Trail telling the story of western expansionism from a tribal point of view. Permanent exhibits bring to life the traditions of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Tribes, who have called the region home for 16,000 years. Tamástslikt (the word means “interpreter”) connects this rich, storied history to our present day.

Artist: Bonnie Meltzer, Portland, Oregon

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While most of the EG2 artists had a year or more to plan their sculptures, artist Bonnie Meltzer jumped in to fill a space left by COVID 19. In just a little over one month, Meltzer called on communities throughout the gorge to meet at her artist studio in a fellowship of needlework. With her passion, Section Nine was a wondrous reflection of the Columbia River.

Meltzer visited her assigned section and was immersed in the grandeur of the river and all it provided to the land. Hydropower, wind power, solar power, and sheer will power was manifested in her beaded, woven, glorious sculpture.

Meltzer worked closely with Randall Melton of The Tamástslikt Cultural Institute to share this work to the community while it was exhibited there.



Community Partner:
ArtWalla

ArtWalla envisions an arts culture of excellence with vibrant events, innovative programs, and multiple, diverse sources of sustained support.

Artist: Kristy Kún, Ashland, Oregon

To say that Kristy Kún works with felt is an understatement. The artist makes felt, shapes felt, and compiles and arranges felt with a brain trained as an engineer and the eye of a visual artist. For this, you may find her work on the cover of American Craft and Fiber Art Now magazines.

Kún lives in Ashland, Oregon but that did not deter her accepting a partner on the east side of Washington state. She gave talks about her work, her process, and the sculpture, all while maintaining a brutal schedule of commission work.

Kún's section brought the Columbia River down a metal river with a sculpted white-felt backdrop, joining to the confluence of the Snake River in a brilliant red swirl. Below, a fin of fiberglass was adorned metal rods to represent the world below the surface. It was the perfect way to bring The Exquisite Gorge Project to its conclusion.

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Event Day



On August 8, over 1200 people came together to experience *The Fiber Arts Festival* and to watch the building of *The Exquisite Gorge II: Fiber Art sculpture*. Sheep were shorn, yarn stashes were swapped, cardboard looms were given to inspire new generations of artists. This successful Project wove together individuals into one beautiful tapestry.

PHOTOS BY:
JOHN PEDERSEN PHOTOGRAPHY



EXQUISITE APPRECIATION

COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

In addition to the participating artists, there are many partner organizations and sponsors who made The Exquisite Gorge Project II possible.

Section One:

Oregon Society of Artists

Artist: Lynn Deal

Section Two:

Lewis and Clark University

Artist: Amanda Triplett

Section Three:

Columbia Center for the Arts, The History Museum of Hood River County and Arts in Education of the Gorge

Artist: Chloë Hight

Section Four:

White Salmon Arts Council and Fort Vancouver Regional Library

Artist: Xavier Griffith

Section Five:

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center, The Dalles-Wasco County Library, and The Dalles Arts Center

Artists: Francisco and Laura Bautista

Section Six:

The Fort Vancouver Regional Library at Goldendale Community Library

Artist: Carolyn Hazel Drake

Section Seven:

The American-Romanian Cultural Society and Maryhill Museum of Art

Artist: Magda Nica

Section Eight:

Desert Fiber Arts & REACH Museum

Artist: Ophir El-Boher

Section Nine:

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; The Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute

Artist: Bonnie Meltzer

Section Ten:

ArtWalla

Artist: Kristy Kún

Frontispiece: Tammy Jo Wilson and Owen Premore

SPONSORS:

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The Salvador Fund of the Gorge Community Foundation

Columbia Fiber Arts Guild

Umpqua Bank, Goldendale Branch

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Google Volunteers

Northwest Regional Spinners Association

Premier Metal

Olympic Yarn and Fiber

StoryGorge

Desert Fiber Arts Volunteers

Goldendale Community Library

White Salmon Library

The Dalles-Wasco Library

Additional thanks go to all our community partners and artists and a special thanks to Friderike Heuer and Oregon ArtWatch.

Over 200 miles
of community
partnerships and
sponsors

This publication is dedicated to The Exquisite Gorge Artist, Steven Munoz. May his spirit fly with the bees.

