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### **Missoula Art Park Exhibit Showcases Large Sculptures from Salvaged Materials**

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MAM invites the public to experience *Jay Laber: Reborn Rez Wrecks* in the Missoula Art Park. Jay Laber (Amskapi Pikuni/Blackfeet, 1961–2019), passed away last year and left a strong legacy of public artwork. When he was three years old, Laber’s family left Montana after the devastating flood of 1964. When Laber returned to Montana in the late 1990s, he enrolled at Salish Kootenai College in Pablo to study forestry. After taking art classes on the side, he began making sculptures of warriors, dancers, and wildlife out of discarded car parts. Laber’s innovative sculptures depict traditional Native culture using found and salvaged metal. “It’s a new twist on an old tradition...to make things out of whatever was handy, and that was handy,” Laber said.

Laber settled on Post Creek outside of St. Ignatius and launched his studio, which he named Reborn Rez Wrecks. He was a precise craftsman and built large-scale sculpture that weighed hundreds of pounds with tight tolerances. He would meticulously sift through hundreds of parts before selecting and inserting exactly the right piece to suggest or describe an essential detail. In 1999, the Blackfeet Nation and the Montana Arts Council commissioned a set of four sentries to oversee the North, West, South, and East entrances of the Blackfeet Reservation. Laber made them from rusted-out cars that were damaged in the flood that displaced his family. *Jay Laber: Reborn Rez Wrecks* includes one of Laber’s first sentry pieces, made in one of Corwin Clairmont’s classes. Laber’s expertise and vision considered all angles of each sculpture, making his works appear active, kinetic, and full of energy.

“This exhibition is an important acknowledgement of an internationally recognized artist whose iconic public commissions are located across the state. The Art Park is the ideal environment in which to host Laber’s large-scale sculpture, and this is the first exhibition in the Art Park that exemplifies MAM’s strong commitment to contemporary Native artists,” said Brandon Reintjes, senior curator at MAM.

*Jay Laber: Reborn Rez Wrecks* is on view in the Missoula Art Park from June 5 through October 2020. This exhibition is sponsored by Dick Anderson Construction, Caras Nursery, Rocky Mountain Moving & Storage, and the City of Missoula.

**About MAM:** Founded in 1975 and accredited by the American Association of Museums since 1987, MAM is emerging as the leading contemporary art museum in the Intermountain West. MAM is situated on the traditional, ancestral territories of the Séliš (Salish or “Flathead”) and Q̓lispé (upper Kalispel or Pend d’Oreille) peoples. MAM is committed to respecting the indigenous stewards of the land it occupies. Their rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Montana and to the work of MAM. MAM is a fully accessible, free public museum boasting eight exhibition spaces, a library, and education center in the heart of Missoula’s historic downtown.

**If you would like more information about this topic, please call Brandon Reintjes at 406.728.0447 or email [brandon@missoulaartmuseum.org](mailto:brandon@missoulaartmuseum.org).**

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