



NEWS RELEASE

Joe Feddersen: *Vital Signs*
Exhibition Opening: June 3 - September 20, 2008, 5 -8 pm
Artist Reception & Curator's Gallery Talk: Rebecca J. Dobkins,
June 6, 2008, 7 pm
Artist's Slide Share: June 7, 2008, 12 pm

Missoula, MT / March 29, 2008 / Missoula Art Museum (MAM)/Joe Feddersen: *Vital Signs*, a major retrospective exhibition for this highly regarded Native American artist, will open on June 3 and continue through September 20, 2008, at the Missoula Art Museum. Organized by the Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, the exhibition begins a two-year national tour.

Joe Feddersen: Vital Signs explores the artist's interest in the interrelationships between urban place markers and indigenous landscapes through powerful combinations of contemporary media and native iconography and will feature an extraordinary selection of his best work in prints, glass and weaving, and created since 1996. The exhibition includes 62 stunning works drawn from public and private collections throughout the United States, including the Tacoma Art Museum, the Hallie Ford Museum of Art at Willamette University, the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, and the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, among others.

Vital signs, the pulses and patterns of the body, are indicators of essential life functions. The powerful work of Joe Feddersen reveals, like vital signs themselves, the state of the human condition from the vantage point of a contemporary artist who has inherited an ancient aesthetic tradition.

Arising from Plateau Indian iconographic interpretations of the human-environment relationship, Feddersen's prints, weavings, and glass sculptures explore the relationships between contemporary urban place markers and indigenous design. Following in the footsteps of his Plateau Indian ancestors who spoke to the land in the patterns of the baskets, Feddersen interprets the urbanscapes and landscapes surrounding him and transforms those rhythms into art forms that are both coolly modern and warmly expressionistic.

Feddersen was born in 1953, in Omak, Washington, just off the Colville Indian Reservation. His mother was Okanogan and Lakes from Penticton, Canada; his father was the son of German immigrants. He has been a member of the art faculty at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, since 1989.

In 2001, Feddersen was awarded the prestigious Eiteljorg Fellowship for Native American Fine Art. The fellowship was an acknowledgment of Feddersen's stature among his peers and in the contemporary Native art world. It affirmed Feddersen's exploration of the relationship between modernism and indigenous aesthetics. Shortly after receiving the Eiteljorg award, Feddersen began his *Urban Indian* series that includes prints, woven baskets, and glass sculptures. This wide-ranging body of work employs designs that inhabit our contemporary urbanscape, often juxtaposed with Plateau-derived designs abstracted from the indigenous landscape. As Feddersen says, "The newer designs I come up with just acknowledge today's reality.... Our landscape is dotted with these high voltage towers. They become part of our existence. Parking lots, everything, becomes part of our land today. I don't know if things become kind of romantic--you look at the landscape and ignore the high voltage towers and the parking lots--but this is where we live and it is part of our life today" (interview with author, 2007).

In addition to the objects on display, the exhibition will include a full color, 112-page catalogue. Co-published by the Hallie Ford Museum of Art, the University of Washington Press and Evergreen State College, the book will be a major new volume in the *Jacob Lawrence Series on American Art and Artists* of the University of Washington Press. In addition to a biographical essay by exhibition curator and Willamette University professor Rebecca Dobkins, the book will include an introduction by artist Barbara Thomas and a critical essay by artist/writer Gail Tremblay, approximately 60 color and black and white illustrations, a biography on the artist, and a bibliography for further reading.

Joe Feddersen: Vital Signs has been supported in part by an endowment gift from the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, through their Spirit Mountain Community Fund. Additional support has been provided by a Visual Arts grant from the National Museum of the American Indian and General Operating Support grants from the City of Salem's Transient Occupancy Tax funds and the Oregon Arts Commission.

Contact: For more information please contact the Missoula Art Museum at 406-728-0447, visit the MAM website at www.missoulaartmuseum.org or contact Steve Glueckert, Curator of Exhibitions, stevegl@missoulaartmuseum.org, 406.728.0447 x226

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