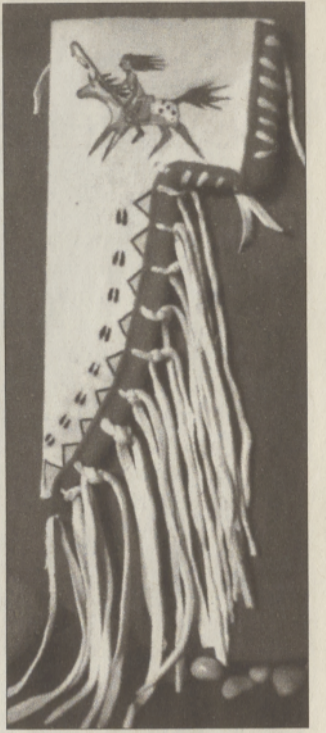
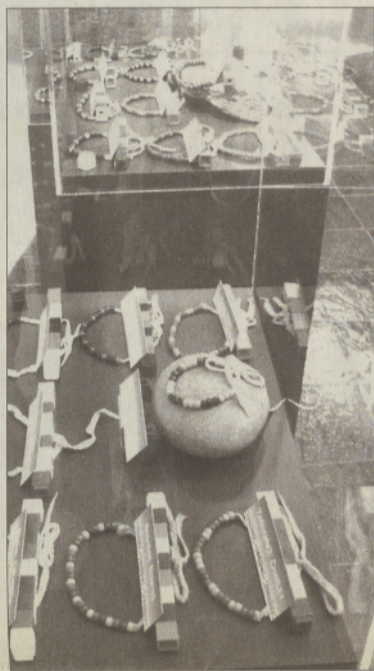


Youth Art Exhibit at Museum



The Museum at Warm Springs is now hosting the Sixteenth Annual Tribal Youth Art Exhibit. Some of the items on display include:

"Our Regalia" (top), created by youth in room A-3 at the Early Childhood Education Center. "Little Indians" (below), created by youth in room B-2 at ECE. Beaded items (right) by Soraya Yvana Mendez "Yaxcla". Other young artists featured on this page include Turak Newman, Charmaine Billy, Martin Smith Manneby, LaRonn Katchbia, and ECE Headstart 4-year-olds.



Dave McMechan photos



National museum posts 5,500 art, artifact objects on line

Washington, D.C. — Jeri Redcorn was 54 years old when she first saw the beautiful clay pottery that would change the course of her life.

The pottery had been unearthed by archaeologists in Arkansas and Louisiana.

It was amazingly light-weight for its size, and vastly different from any American Indian pottery she'd seen.

And it was made by her Caddoan forbears for thousands of years.

In the 160 years since the Caddo moved away from Arkansas and Louisiana—first to Texas and later, escaping with their lives, to the plains of Oklahoma—generations of Caddo people had never seen, nor heard of these iconic ancestral pots.

The skills to make them had been lost. "We were overcome," Redcorn recalled of that day in 1992.

"An elder man, speaking for all of us, said, 'I didn't know we did this.'"

Now, at age 69, Redcorn is known for reviving the Caddo style of pottery, and her pots are among the first 5,500 objects from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian collection to be posted online.

The new service debuted earlier this month. You can view the site at:

www.AmericanIndian.si.edu/searchcollections/home.aspx

800,000 items

"If I had had access to an



Mask among many items NMAI has posted on line.

online collection of Caddo art then, it would have made my life so much easier," said Redcorn, who lives in Norman, Okla.

The museum plans to post images and information about its 800,000-object collection on its website.

The purpose, said NMAI Curator Ann McMullen, is to make the site educational at the same time as bringing the collection back into the heart of Native communities, at least digitally.

Museums worldwide are experimenting with online databases that allow the public to view their collections from home computers.

Smithsonian Institution Secretary Wayne Clough hosted a symposium at the National Museum of the American Indian last month where he talked about the importance of digitizing all 137 million objects in the Smithsonian museums—to bring the material to "young

people, especially."

Few museums have ventured to post indigenous collections online, in part out of a recognition of ethical concerns.

Such issues are easy to mediate with contemporary art by living artists such as Redcorn.

But when the artists and objects are historic, the museum must make sensitive decisions, including whether an object is too sacred to be put on the Internet.

To date it has posted objects already on display in its museums, because tribes have approved their public exhibition.

The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington attracts 63,000 hits a month for its online collection of 130,000 objects, said Philip Edgar, collection information services manager.

But his museum has refrained from posting all of its Taonga Maori collection while it develops a process for consulting with iwi, or tribes, especially for objects whose provenance is unknown.

Edgar said he will watch how NMAI deals with similar ethical issues.

The National Museum of the American Indian has been successful in what it calls community curation, in which traditional culture bearers from Native communities advise curators about the care, maintenance and display of objects from their tribes.

NMAI Associate Director for Museum Programs Tim Johnson, who is Mohawk, said

the online collection will expand that valuable input.

"Now we can do curation via online chatting with someone in a Native community," he said.

The result will likely be a correction of the museum's original records.

Many of those documents were established by George Gustav Heye (1874-1957), the New York investment banker whose vast historic collection was the foundation for the National Museum of the American Indian.

"You have to remember, the collection was collected by a non-Indian, so the interpretation of that material was not from a Native perspective," Johnson said. "The revolution of this museum is to promulgate that interpretation of the collection by tribes."

Those who use the online collection, such as tribal elders and scholars, can easily share insights and information about the artifacts with museum staff.

Associated with every object is a contact button, through which web users can make comments, send corrections, or ask to reprint photos.

Curator Ann McMullen is among the NMAI staff who will review the Internet correspondence daily.

McMullen has been working toward linking the public website with the museum's own database since 2006.

Staffers studied surveys filled out by tech-savvy Web users, elders, eighth-graders and professional teachers, all of whom

the museum imagined might use its online service.

The "collection search" site is programmed to recognize historic as well as contemporary names. A map of the Americas allows users to pick a geographic area to easily find objects from a general location, if a tribe's name isn't known.

"We wanted a grandparent to be able to go to a library with a child and use this," McMullen said.

She knows there is work to be done, research that may delay posting of the entire collection for years.

Sometimes a historic object may be identified by one tribe, but really originated in another.

As tribes correct this information, McMullen said, it will generate insight into gifting, trade, and exchange traditions among various nations, as well as about families who made objects.

Truman Lowe, a Ho Chunk artist and professor at the University of Wisconsin, agreed:

"It's not only going to reinvigorate history, it is also going to reinvigorate the art traditions."

In the same way, he said, the very existence of the National Museum of the American Indian, which was established by Congress in 1989, has provided important new links among generations.

Lowe remembers when Hopi painter Michael Kabotie found a painting by his father, Fred Kabotie, in the NMAI collection.

As museum curators gathered, Michael Kabotie spontaneously shared a history of art in his family and tribe.

Much like Redcorn's discovery of her tribe's pottery and her determination to revive the practice, Lowe anticipates that "a contemporary look at these objects opens a potential for the rebirth of culture. I am more excited about the cross influences that will transpire. It happened historically, and it's already happening with contemporary artists. Technology has a way of speeding up influences, variations on tradition."

To Redcorn, her work being part of the NMAI's online collection is one more sign that no one need go without knowing what Caddo pottery is.

As she found in her effort to recover the Caddo potter's art, the clay from the banks of the Red River would be her greatest teacher.

Native art, she said, will usually lead back to something tactile, like a river, a riverbank, a vein of clay.

"Even though we had our language, songs and dances, so much was taken away from who we were—until we were on the plains singing an alligator song where there were no alligators," Redcorn said. "Right now we are all experiencing a lot of pride in who we are. I think that is great."

(Article by Kara Briggs of the National Museum of the American Indian news service.)