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HOLLITER MUSEUM of ART



FIVE NEW EXHIBITS LAUNCH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

Life-size warriors ■ Ancient bronzes ■ Demons ■ Horses ■ Shifting perspectives

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Escape the cold with Wahlberg, Beckinsale pg05



Holter celebrates 25 years

Ancient bronzes centerpiece of five stunning exhibits

By MARGA LINCOLN
INDEPENDENT RECORD

Five spectacular shows kick off the Holter Museum of Art's 25th anniversary year, including a centerpiece exhibit "Ancient Bronzes of the Asian Grasslands from the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation."

Crafted by artisans of the Asian steppes, the 85 ancient bronzes on display were once used by horsemen, chieftains and shamans as far back as 3,400 years ago.

An opening reception for all five exhibits (see related articles) is set for 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 20, at the Holter. And a talk by the curator of the Sackler Foundation, Trudy Kawami, is at 5:30 p.m. across the street from the Holter at St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

The Asian steppes, encompassing a vast region stretching from east of the Gobi Desert in Mongolia to the far western grasslands of Kazakhstan beyond the Caspian Sea, are home to nomadic tribes with a rich and ancient culture. Skilled herders and animal breeders, they were the first to domesticate the wild horse, said Holter Curator Yvonne Seng.

It was these nomadic herdsmen and horsemen who guided trade caravans along the famous Silk Road linking Asia to Europe. "They controlled transportation of goods, but also transportation of information," she said. It was a major route of cultural exchange.

Among the exhibit items are cauldrons used by shamans for mixing mind-altering herbs, which would later give rise to European legends of magic cauldrons. The shamans inhaled the fumes of the drugs and entered ecstatic, trance-like states to contact animal and human spirits and the forces of nature.

There's also a spoon, adorned with



This bronze spoon, adorned with bird shapes, was used for measuring sacred herbs.

graceful bird-shapes, used for measuring sacred herbs; decorative belt buckles in the form of yaks or felines attacking deer; ornate knives; and a sword with an ibex handle.

"Some of the items would have belonged to chieftains and were buried ceremonially," said Seng. "Some were used for personal adornment."

Accompanying the exhibit is a slideshow of faces and places of the Asian grasslands.

"The topography is very similar to Montana," said Seng, as is their love for horses.

"I think it's a perfect fit," said Seng

Holter's 25th anniversary

What: Receptions for five new Holter exhibits,

When: 7 to 8:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 20

Where: Holter Museum of Art, 12 E. Lawrence

What: Public talk, "Ancient Bronzes of the Asian Grasslands" by Trudy Kawami, curator of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation
When: 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 20
Where: St. Paul's United Methodist Church, corner of Cruse and Lawrence (across from the Holter Museum of Art)

What and when: Gallery talks by artists: 10 to 11 a.m. Wanxin Zhang; 11 a.m. to noon, Dudley Dana and Candace Crosby, Saturday, Jan. 21.

Cost: Free, but donations welcome

Contact: 442-6400 or www.holtermuseum.org

Watch Your Time for more Holter Art Museum 25th Anniversary programs

of the show, "both culturally and artistically. There's an affinity with what we have here."

In fact, in the languages of the Asian steppes, the word for God, "Tangri," translates as "the great blue sky," said Seng. And the Mongolian word for horse, "Takh," means holy.

"Montana and the Asian steppes share a passion for horse culture and a love of the wide open sky.... These two passions — horses and the wide open — link the work of ancient horsemen to contemporary regional artists."

The other Holter exhibits include: life-size clay sculptures by Wanxin Zhang, "A Ten Year Survey"; "Horse and Rider" a joint exhibit by Montana artists John Buck and Deborah Butterfield; "Shifting Perspectives," a photo-and-essay exhibit of China by Missoula photographer Dudley Dana and writer Candace Crosby; and "Invite Your Demons to Tea," a series of Tibetan-inspired ceramic works by Helena artist Valerie Hellemann.

John Buck and Deborah Butterfield: 'Horse and Rider'

This rare joint exhibition brings together the works of two internationally celebrated Montana artists.

Sculptor and printmaker Buck works with two interrelated bodies of work: carved wood, assemblage and bronze sculptures, and large, multicolored woodblock prints.

Butterfield started making horses in 1973 mostly out of wood and organic matter, and cast her first bronze horse in 1985.

Her pieces in "Horse and Rider" are relatively small scale and express an interplay of materials and techniques. In 2010 both received the Montana Governor's Arts Award.

Dudley Dana and Candace Crosby: 'Shifting Perspectives'

Photographer Dudley Dana and writer Candace Crosby present their written and visual images of southern China where they were invited to travel with six artists. Dana and Crosby are co-owners of the Dana Gallery in Missoula, where both are psychologists. Dana has been Artist-In-Residence in Glacier Park and the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming. He was also a photographer for the America 24/7 Project. Crosby's

astute observations add another perspective to Dana's images. Their collaborative gallery exhibitions of text and image include "Sixth Cup of Tea," "Tres Amigos" and "Raptors." On exhibit through April 8.

Valerie Hellemann: 'Invite Your Demons to Tea'

Valerie Hellemann's "Invite Your Demons to Tea" will be on exhibit Jan. 20-Feb. 26 in the Holter's Nicholson Artworks Gallery.

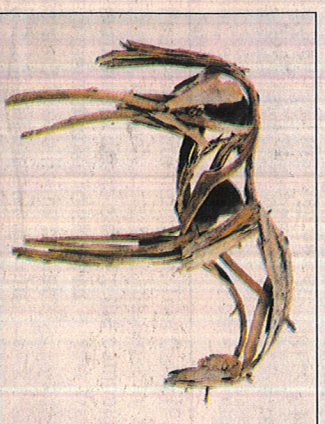
Hellemann's work is inspired by Tibetan Buddhist monk Patrul Rinpoche who once said "from time to time invite your demons to tea." The idea of a safe and comfortable space to meet and disempower your demons intrigues the Helena artist. Hellemann's porcelain sculptures are inspired by the sacred Cham dances of Tibet performed by Buddhist monks.

She explains that "in my studio, I drink tea, listen to Buddhist teachings, and invite demons to take form through clay. My hope is they will bring strength and courage to the viewer."

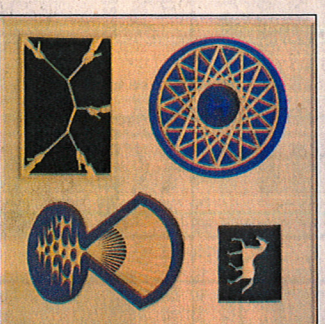
For Hellemann, making art has been a lifelong passion. She took her first ceramic class at the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts after moving from Westchester County, N.Y. According to her, "from day one the feel of clay in my hands and the instinctive shaping of mud into form was a new found passion."

At the Bray she had the opportunity to attend workshops taught by many clay legends. In 2002 she undertook a 15-week residency in China at the Sanbao International Clay Institute in Jingdezhen, where she learned about the techniques of porcelain while immersed in this ancient culture.

Her artwork reflects her world travel experiences,



Horse sculpture by Deborah Butterfield and assemblage by John Buck



'Ambiguity' by Valerie Helleman and photo of boys jumping by Dudley Dana

