

# Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Alliance

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:**

Lee Weinstein

[columbiagorgeartsandculture@gmail.com](mailto:columbiagorgeartsandculture@gmail.com)

+1 (503) 708-0402



*Running Fruit Ladders installation. Artist: John Maher.*

## **Discover The Secrets**

*- Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Discovery Month is May 2011 -*

*- Wildflower season and fruit orchards will be in high bloom, as artists, historians and institutions come together to celebrate one of the Pacific Northwest's natural and cultural wonders -*

**The Dalles, OR and White Salmon, WA (January 5, 2011)** – Some of the great arts, culture and heritage secrets of the Pacific Northwest will certainly be discovered this May, 2011 when the Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Alliance hosts the first **Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Discovery Month**.

The Alliance has received grants from the Oregon and Washington State Arts Commissions in support of the month-long “Discover The Secrets” celebration. Highlights include the Gorge Artists Open Studios Tour, the weekend of May 14-15, 2011; Running Fruit Ladders, a large-scale art installation (see illustration above); and special activities planned by arts and culture organizations throughout the [85-mile Gorge area](#).

*Psst! One secret? The Columbia River Gorge is the nation's first and largest National Scenic Area, which is [celebrating its 25 anniversary in 2011](#). As such it seamlessly combines spectacular natural beauty of the Gorge with the charm and amenities of numerous vibrant small towns. There are natural secrets to be discovered at every turn, and in every nook and cranny, which have and continue to deeply influence the culture of the area.*

Many people outside the region are unaware that the Columbia Gorge is chock full of talented artists and cultural icons. There is a huge influence from its long history as the crossroads of commerce and trade for the region's Native American cultures, as a hub for American explorers and pioneers (the Lewis & Clark Expedition traveled through the Gorge), including Japanese, Chinese and Latino peoples who have played a critical role in modern development, and as a gateway to the vibrant Portland metropolitan area and Willamette Valley. There is also a huge and uniquely expressed influence from the present-day vibrant Portland art scene. And there is just about everything in between.

*Psst! Another secret? The second largest collection of Auguste Rodin artwork on the West Coast of the United States is located at Maryhill Museum of Art near Goldendale, WA!*

"This is a chance for non-residents to discover a treasure trove of fun, interesting and accessible arts and culture experiences, and to come spend a weekend or two this May in the Gorge," says Joanie Thomson, executive director of Columbia Center for the Arts in Hood River. "It's a chance for residents and organizations to share their favorite arts and culture activities with visitors and each other, and to get out and celebrate their amazing cultural riches."

*Psst! Another secret? Near Maryhill Museum, the only full-scale replica of the original Stonehenge in North America is a memorial to fallen WWI warriors. It also makes a uniquely stunning setting and backdrop for spontaneous musical or dramatic presentations.*

Hotels, restaurants, wineries and shops on both sides of the Columbia River in Oregon and Washington will be participating in Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Discovery Month; each sharing what their secret tips are related to art, culture and heritage in the area. Residents with "Ask Me My Secret?" buttons will also share their favorite Gorge historical and artistic gems with visitors and each other.

*Psst! Here are a few more arts and culture secrets of the Columbia River Gorge:*

- *The Columbia Gorge Discovery Center contains permanent exhibits of the Lewis and Clark expeditions and the Ice Age Floods that helped form and influence the amazing history of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.*
- *When you visit the [Columbia River Gorge Interpretive Center Museum](#) you are able to visualize and participate in the uniquely bountiful life and heritage of the Columbia River Gorge.*
- *The famous Indian petroglyph "[She Who Watches](#)", traces a human history in the Gorge that is 10,000 years old. You can get a guided tour of similar pictographs and petroglyphs at Columbia Hills State Park.*
- *A world of over [30 award-winning wineries](#) and 6 fabulous breweries exists in within a 40-mile stretch of the Gorge.*
- *One of the highest commercially rafted waterfalls in the country is a focal point for rafters, kayakers and spectators at Husum, WA on the Wild and Scenic White Salmon River.*

**Here are just a few of the scheduled events for Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Discovery Month:**

- **Gorge Open Studios Tour (weekend of May 14 & 15, 2011):** The centerpiece for Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Month, the fifth annual Gorge Open Studios features ceramic and fiber artists, painters, sculptors, jewelers, digital artists, photographers and furniture makers all showing their work in their homes and studios. Full color tour guides (\$15) with maps and area highlights will be available in the Gorge at Waucoma books and Columbia Center for the Arts in Hood River, The Dalles Art Center and Klindt's Booksellers in the Dalles, and Ten Speed Coffee in Mosier, OR. They can also be purchased in Portland Art Media and Frame Central Stores and the downtown Powells' Books Art Section. Info and ticket info at <http://gorgeartists.org>.
- **Running Fruit Ladders installation:** While some people see roadsides only as a place to change a tire, Mosier, OR artist John Maher saw an opportunity to use art to promote small farms. "I thought a huge procession of brightly painted wooden orchard ladders, each 14 feet tall with the line stretching along major highways for ½ mile or more would get some attention," says John. "Not only would we be bringing something fun and exciting into peoples lives who are traveling, we would be promoting an important cause – small farms and locally grown food." The beautifully shaped wooden ladders are all mostly retired now, replaced for safety reasons by aluminum ladders in the orchards. This is a rare opportunity to see them in their best form yet. The installations will take place from May through August at four locations in the Columbia Gorge Scenic Area. Major highways near Hood River, Mosier, The Dalles and on land owned by Maryhill Museum of Art in Goldendale will be the viewing areas for the Running Fruit Ladders art installations, which are supported in part by Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers Association and the Oregon Arts Commission. See <http://www.gorgeartists.org> for locations and more.
- **The Third Annual River Peoples Cultural Exchange:** May 14th, 2011, Noon to 5:00 at Park Place in Lyle, Washington, on Hwy 14. The event is a collaborative effort of the residents of Lyle and Native Americans to share traditions, educate, build friendships and promote goodwill within our communities and region. Native artists perform drumming, dancing, and storytelling. Elders and tribal leader will relate their life wisdom, local history, and current challenges and successes. Participants are invited to join in dancing, create traditional Native American crafts, and purchase handmade Indian crafts and fry bread from local vendors. At 4:00 all are welcomed to feast on a traditional salmon dinner. The event is free but donations are welcome. More info at [www.riverpeoplesculturalexchange.org](http://www.riverpeoplesculturalexchange.org).
- **Inspirational Invitational:** The Dalles Art Center will feature an invitational show of a variety of Gorge artists, including Gayle Weisfield and Doug Leash, as they present work that goes in unexpected directions. More info at [www.thedallesartcenter.org](http://www.thedallesartcenter.org).
- **The History Museum of Hood River County will open its "Artful Artifacts: Museum Inspiration" exhibit** on May 6, which runs until July 1, 2010. The museum has chosen an artifact (a Victorian hair tress) and will showcase work by local artists inspired by the artifact. Museum info at <http://tinyurl.com/263zceg>
- **Columbia Gorge National Discovery Center will feature "The Art of Nature"** including an outdoor kinetic sculpture exhibit by artists Arthur Higgins, wildflower interpretive tours on the museum grounds with over 90 blooming species, and a native plant sale. Info: [www.gorgediscovery.org](http://www.gorgediscovery.org).

- **Maryhill Museum of Art's new exhibit, "Process and Presence: Selections from the Museum of Contemporary Craft"** will be on view March 15-July 4, 2011, featuring 40 handmade objects from Portland's Museum of Contemporary Craft worked in clay, metal, wood and fiber. Among the artists featured are woodworker Sam Maloof, ceramicist Peter Voukos, jewelry artist Ramona Solberg, glass and ceramic artist Ray Grimm, and textile artist Judith Poxson Fawkes. The museum's Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit begins May 14<sup>th</sup>. Info: [www.maryhillmuseum.org](http://www.maryhillmuseum.org).
- **Maryhill Museum's annual Founder's Day celebration** on May 21 will feature a garden walk of the sculpture garden, a Family Fun Program ("Painting on Maps") and a **slide/lecture "The Columbia River Highway: Its History, Decline, and Preservation"**. The Historic Columbia River Highway, known as the "KING OF ROADS", was the first scenic highway in the United States, and continues to entrance today's traveler as it serpentine the cliffs and waterfalls near the southern shore of the Columbia River Gorge. The highway's close link to Maryhill founder Sam Hill makes for a compelling story of Pacific Northwest expansion in the early 20th century. Speakers include: Robert Hadlow, PhD, Senior Historian, Oregon Department of Transportation; David Sell, retired from Western Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration and George Fekaris, a current employee of Western Federal Lands Highway Division. The Museum's Historic Loops Road will be open for driving this weekend (the first paved road in Washington state). Info: [www.maryhillmuseum.org](http://www.maryhillmuseum.org).
- **The Columbia Gorge Fiddle Contest** will be May 6-8, drawing contestants from Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Montana, Idaho and California. One of the favorite contests in the Pacific Northwest and fully certified by the National Fiddle Contest & Festival in Weiser, Idaho, the contest draws over 110 contestants spanning age groups from Small Fry to Senior with additional Multi Instrumental Picking divisions for Juniors and Adults. Info: [www.ColumbiaGorgeFiddleContest.com](http://www.ColumbiaGorgeFiddleContest.com).
- **Columbia Center for the Arts** will feature live performance, art gallery show, music, film, adult & children's art classes. Info: [www.columbiaarts.org](http://www.columbiaarts.org).
- **The Gorge Heritage Museum Plant and Garden Art Sale** on Saturday, May 7, 2011 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Located in Bingen, WA, the museum promotes the legacy of the Native peoples and immigrants who settled in the area, and will have a special 2011 exhibition on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Info: <http://community.gorge.net/ghmuseum>.
- **David M. Cobb photography workshop**, April 29 – May 2. Info: [www.dmcobbphoto.com](http://www.dmcobbphoto.com).
- **Peter Marbach's photo essay book release and author's signing** will be May 24<sup>th</sup> at a place to be announced. Featuring photography by Marbach and text by Janet Cook, this stunning publication will commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the creation of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, the first in the nation. The images and text will reflect on how the Scenic Area came to be, the successes and challenges of the first 25 years, and the vision for the future. The book will also include comments from U.S. President Jimmy Carter. Info: [www.petermarbach.com](http://www.petermarbach.com).

## **About the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area**

2011 also marks the 25th anniversary of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act. The Act was an experimental compromise established by congress that has resulted in a successful model for sustainable communities thriving alongside spectacular resources protected for future generations. Just a short 30-minute, drive from downtown Portland, OR and Vancouver, WA, the Gorge contains an unparalleled combination of scenery, geology, plants, wildlife, recreation and rich cultural history. Beauty abounds as the Gorge begins in the west with old growth forests and transitions in only 40 miles into bunchgrass prairies in the east stunning waterfalls over imposing basalt walls throughout.

The Gorge contains nearly 1,000 native species of wildflowers with 16 known species that don't exist anywhere else in the world. The area is also home to more than 70,000 residents, including hundreds of artists, historians and naturalists who have been attracted to the area's natural beauty and unique charm of the area communities. The Gorge is a living, breathing, working landscape – chock-full of unique cultural identities and communities – each with their own economic niche. The area has been a major center of fishing and trade for Native Americans for well over 10,000 years, up to the present day. Members of Celilo Village, an unincorporated Native American community, continue to fish at the site of the inundated Celilo Falls.

More information about the Scenic Area Act, Gorge resources and the yearlong celebration of the 25th anniversary can be viewed at the following sites:

- US Forest Service: [www.fs.usda.gov/crgnsa](http://www.fs.usda.gov/crgnsa)
- Columbia Gorge Commission: [www.gorgecommission.org](http://www.gorgecommission.org)
- Columbia Gorge 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: [www.gorge25.com](http://www.gorge25.com)
- West Columbia Gorge Chamber of Commerce: [www.westcolumbiagorgechamber.com](http://www.westcolumbiagorgechamber.com)
- Hood River Chamber of Commerce: [www.hoodriver.org](http://www.hoodriver.org)
- The Dalles Chamber of Commerce: [www.thedallescchamber.com](http://www.thedallescchamber.com)
- Greater Goldendale Chamber of Commerce: [www.goldendalechamber.org](http://www.goldendalechamber.org)
- Skamania County Chamber of Commerce: [www.skamania.org](http://www.skamania.org)
- Columbia Gorge Visitors Association: [www.crgva.org](http://www.crgva.org)
- Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce: [www.mtadams.com](http://www.mtadams.com)
- Rediviva Magazine: [www.redivivamag.com](http://www.redivivamag.com)
- Gorge Guide: [www.gorgeguide.com](http://www.gorgeguide.com)
- Columbia Gorge Magazine: [www.columbiagorge.com](http://www.columbiagorge.com)
- Confluence Project: [www.confluenceproject.org](http://www.confluenceproject.org)
- Travel Oregon: [www.traveloregon.com](http://www.traveloregon.com)
- Explore Washington: [www.explorewa.com](http://www.explorewa.com)
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge: [www.gorgefriends.org](http://www.gorgefriends.org)
- Historic Columbia River Highway: [www.columbiariverhighway.com](http://www.columbiariverhighway.com)
- Friends of the Historic Columbia River Highway: [www.hcrh.org](http://www.hcrh.org)

**EDITORS NOTE: For images related to Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Month visit**  
<http://columbiagorgeartsandculture.com/media-images>

**About the Columbia Gorge Arts and Culture Alliance:** Formed in 2010 by Columbia Gorge culture and arts organizations, historians, artists and culture mavens, the CGACA promotes the Columbia Gorge as an arts and culture region and destination: A magnet that will draw local residents and visitors and benefit our economy. The CGACA focuses on the economic benefit of making the Columbia Gorge recognizable as an arts and culture region. Its goals are for culture and arts organizations and individuals to be recognized as being economically vital to the region, and to make them renewable and sustainable. For more information visit [www.columbiagorgeartsandculture.com](http://www.columbiagorgeartsandculture.com).