

'WaterWorks' flows to the wetlands

Public art initiative continues with video installation at Dry Creek Schoolhouse

BY SARAH GIANELLI
EBS ASSOCIATE EDITOR

BIG SKY - Mountain Time Arts, a public art organization based in Bozeman, continues its series "WaterWorks" with a multi-screen video installation at Belgrade's Dry Creek Schoolhouse, and accompanying tours of the nearby wetlands.

"Wetlands" opens Friday, July 21, and runs noon to 6 p.m. daily through July 30. It is the third in a series of four public art events that follow the flow of water through the Gallatin Valley. Taken together, the series is an educational and creative celebration of water—its availability, distribution, and how it has shaped the valley's history, culture and agriculture.

"Wetlands" follows "Upstream," a conglomeration of storefront window installations, interactive multi-media exhibits and tours concentrated in downtown Bozeman; and "Spring Thirst," two aerial dance performances at Bogert Park Pavilion. The first phase focused on spring runoff, municipal water systems and Bozeman Creek.

Mountain Time Arts commissioned Bently Spang, a multidisciplinary Northern Cheyenne artist, to produce a new work specifically for "Wetlands." Building on an existing series, "War Shirt #6: Water Ways" is a moving mosaic of images that explores the artist's relationship to water within the framework of an oversized war shirt made of welded steel.

The project, featuring 27 video and still screens, will be installed at Belgrade's historic one-room Dry Creek Schoolhouse.

"My intention is not to recreate an actual war shirt but, as in past work in this series, to use the conceptual framework of this form and expand the scale to signify the importance of our water to my homeland," Spang wrote in an artist statement about the piece.

"I've grown up with this water; I know where much of it begins and ends. My relatives in the past who sacrificed so much to secure our homeland for us made sure of that. ... They brilliantly embedded that knowledge in forms like the war shirt in a visual language that I have explored for years."

Daily tours of nearby wetlands led by naturalists will be offered in conjunction with the video installation. Linwood Tall Bull, a Northern

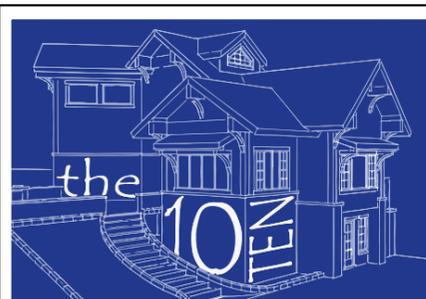


A video installation by multi-media artist Bently Spang opens July 21 at Belgrade's Dry Creek Schoolhouse as part of a summer-long public art initiative that creatively follows the flow of water through Gallatin Creek. The piece will build upon Spang's existing "Modern Warrior" series, one of which, "War Shirt #2," is pictured here. PHOTO COURTESY OF MOUNTAIN TIME ARTS

Cheyenne ethno-botanist, has collaborated with aquatic resource specialist Lynn Bacon and science educator Rose Vallor to provide both a Western and indigenous science perspective. Their insight will highlight the important role wetlands play in cleaning and storing water, and providing a rich environment of plants, wildlife and water life that a healthy wetland ecosystem supports.

"Water finds its way to us every day," Spang wrote. "It navigates the terrain, harnessing gravity and shaping and re-shaping certain places on the earth as it searches for us. I'm interested in how it finds us, why it keeps looking for us when some treat it so poorly and what happens on its journey. I want to learn its language and understand its shape. I've been taught by my elders ... that the better I know a place, both past and present, the more I will protect it and it will protect me."

"Wetlands," featuring the video installation "War Shirt #6: Water Ways" opens Friday, July 21, and runs noon to 6 p.m. daily through July 30. The exhibit is located at 101 Dry Creek School Road, north of Belgrade. Visit mountaintimearts.org for the wetlands tour schedule and to sign up. The event is free and open to the public.



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