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WESTERN RENDEZVOUS OF ART PICTURE OF SUCCESS

Montana Historical Society and Western Rendezvous of Art officials entered this year's event frankly concerned about the uncertainty of the economy and how it might affect sales and attendance.

"We are pleased, and more importantly our patrons and artists were pleased with how the four-days of Rendezvous turned out," Montana Historical Society Special Projects Manager Sue Near said. "We even saw an increase in the number of all-event tickets sold, which are generally purchased by major art buyers."

For the second year in a row more than 1,000 people attended the Rendezvous Art Exhibition at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel last week. More than 500 people bought tickets to the other events.

Rendezvous art sales totaled \$285,950, which was less than 10 percent below last year. Sales at the popular Quick Draw event at the historic Sieben Ranch totaled \$94,100, which matched last year. "We were pleased with the sales, and the good news for the future is that we heard scores of comments about the excellent quality of the art in the exhibition," Near said.

The Montana Historical Society's share of Rendezvous proceeds go to its art acquisition fund and to assist with art programs.

People came to Helena from all over Montana, as well as Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming and also Canada to attend the Rendezvous and get to know the Northwest Rendezvous Group of artists.

Free public events also were popular this year. The new "Milk and Cookies" program on Thursday night, featuring University of Montana Professor Rafael Chacón on the history of the art in

Glacier National Park's lodges, drew about 100 people. Long-time Rendezvous artist Harley Brown filled St. Paul's Methodist Church on Friday afternoon with his highly entertaining program on his life as an artist.

Rendezvous officials thanked their sponsors, who were listed prominently in the art gallery at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel, for helping put on the show. "Rendezvous is good for the Society, for Helena and for Montana as a whole," Near said. "The sponsors and our dozens of Helena-area volunteers are critical to making this work."

Those interested in next year's Rendezvous scheduled for Aug. 18-21, 2011, can log on to www.westrendart.org throughout the coming year to keep up with Rendezvous plans and view next year's art closer to the event.

Awards presented to the artists at this year's event:

*John Scott People's Choice Awards voted on by all those who attended the show went to Jim Daly for his painting "Playing House," and T.D. Kelsey for his sculpture "Mind Games."

*Awards of Merit voted on by NWR artists themselves – Matt Smith for "Pine Creek Falls," Grant Redden for "Summer Days," Gerald Fritzler for "Grand Mesa Falls," Paul Mullally for "Holy Man Rajasthan," and Kenn(cq and remove) Backhaus for "Glacier Run Off in The High Country."

*Ben Stahl Artist's Choice Award voted by NWR artists for overall best collection in the show went to Josh Elliott.

*Joe Halko Heritage Award went to Tom Saubert for "Missouri River Fur Trade, 1874."

*The Montana Historical Society Legacy Award – a piece chosen to become part of the Society's permanent collection was John Potter's "Valley of the Chiefs."

