

Re: Laurel Reuter Director's Fund

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As you know, I have retired. Despite pandemic hardships, I am optimistic about the future and look forward to what lies ahead.

Fifty years ago I dedicated my life to creating a vibrant art world on the plains of eastern North Dakota. I was just a kid in the English Department at the University of North Dakota when the Director of the Student Union asked if I wanted a part-time job keeping a student gallery open on the top floor. It was there I began to think about space, installation, how a gallery works. With full support from the Union Director and Assistant Director, I began.

In 1973, I appointed myself the director and no one cared. I remember it as an exciting time. With the help of my very small staff, we grew the Student Union gallery beyond our expectations. We organized exhibitions by Kenneth Patchen. The catalog was my thesis, the first creative thesis in the English Department. More solo shows followed by Larry Clark (1973), Fritz Scholder (1974), Ed Ruscha (1975), David Gilhooly (1978), Frank Gohlke (1979—organized by New York's Museum of Modern Art), Sol LeWitt (1980), N. Scott Momaday (1981—his first museum exhibition), Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (1981—her first museum exhibition), and a two-person exhibition by Elmer Bischoff and David Parks (1986). I remember fondly celebrating James Rosenquist's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday at the Museum with his painting *Through the Eye of the Needle to the Anvil*.

It seems there are too many memories to share. We opened our current location in 1989 (the former women's gymnasium on campus) with exhibitions by Peter Dean and Barton Benes, who ultimately left the contents of his New York apartment to the Museum to be recreated as it was when he died in 2012. In 1992, when he was just a kid in college in South Dakota, I was fortunate enough to meet Xu Bing and gave him his first Museum exhibition. We remain friends to this day. In 1997, the Museum survived the great flood of the Red River Valley and became the place where churches met, community members gathered, and recovery events were planned. In 2002, we organized the exhibition *Re-imagining New York*, highlighting artists that lost their work in the terrorist attacks of 2001.

In 2004, we opened *The Disappeared*, an exhibition about those who disappeared under the military dictatorships of South America. The Exhibition toured to five places in South and Central America, and five sites in the U.S. The show went on to win many prizes and recognitions including being named one of NewsDay's top ten art events in 2007 in New York City.

As the Museum's mission statement lays out, *we have come to value the arts because they make our hearts wise—the highest of human goals. Therefore, in the most difficult of times, and in an environment that might be perceived as alien to the visual arts, we propose to build a world-class museum for the people of the Northern Plains.* I will go forward knowing we have done this to the best of our abilities. I depart the Museum knowing I have left a fully capable staff entrenched in creating an environment dedicated to equal participation in the arts—be it camps for children, concerts for those who enjoy Blues, Folk, or Classical, or exhibitions not seen in this part of the world.

Growing up on the Spirit Lake Reservation in east-central North Dakota, I was rarely exposed to the arts, except for my aunt and great aunt's landscape paintings and the regalia and paintings of the local Sioux people where I lived. These enriched my understanding of what the arts were. Thus, I unknowingly dedicate my life to ensuring the arts flourished as wide and as far as I possibly could.

In the end, as I move into my new role, I humbly ask you to join me in securing the future of the arts in

North Dakota and beyond. I have put in place a strong staff to support the new director (Matthew Wallace, who has been with the Museum since 2004). My last wish for my staff and new director is that they don't suffer gut aches worrying about where next month's payroll will come from, or how will we pay retirement or insurance premiums next month. I wish for them to continue providing quality programming for years to come.

I, with the encouragement of the Museum board and staff, have established the "Laurel Reuter Director's Fund." I believe so much in what the arts can do that I personally kicked off the fund with a \$100,000 gift. Santa Fe-based Lannan Foundation gifted \$200,000 toward the fund, and long-time supporter Dr. William F. Wosick of Fargo, ND, has committed a \$100,000 match, and recently the Mulhollem Cravens Foundation out of Kentucky contributed \$50,000 to the fund. As you know, gifts of all sizes get us one step closer to our \$2,000,000 goal. I have always hesitated to ask friends, foundations, or supporters to contribute, but I believe strongly in the mission of the Museum and my staff that I hope you will join me.

I am fully committed to seeing this through and look forward to speaking to you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurel Reuter".

Laurel Reuter  
Director

From Cynthia Lindquist, dedicated collaborator and friend.

*The word Dakota means ally or friend and maske (ma sh ke) is sister-friend. Laurel Reuter has been a true sister friend and ally and I am honored to know her. Laurel has brought artists and artistry into the fold for the North Dakota Museum of Art and in doing so she has impacted lives. Having grown up in Tokio, North Dakota, which is on the Spirit Lake Dakota reservation, we like to claim Laurel as one of 'ours'. She is a brilliant collaborator, partner with great insight and vision. Laurel exemplifies and practices Dakota values of compassion, fortitude, and generosity. She has always helped when asked and she does not seek the limelight but prefers to bring forward those who speak via art. I have learned and grown with her leadership skills through our projects. Pidamaya (thank you) maske! Mitakuyapi owasin...all my relations.*

Cynthia Lindquist, PhD, President  
Šuñka Wakañ Wicahpi Wiñ...Star Horse Woman  
Cankdeska Cikana Community College