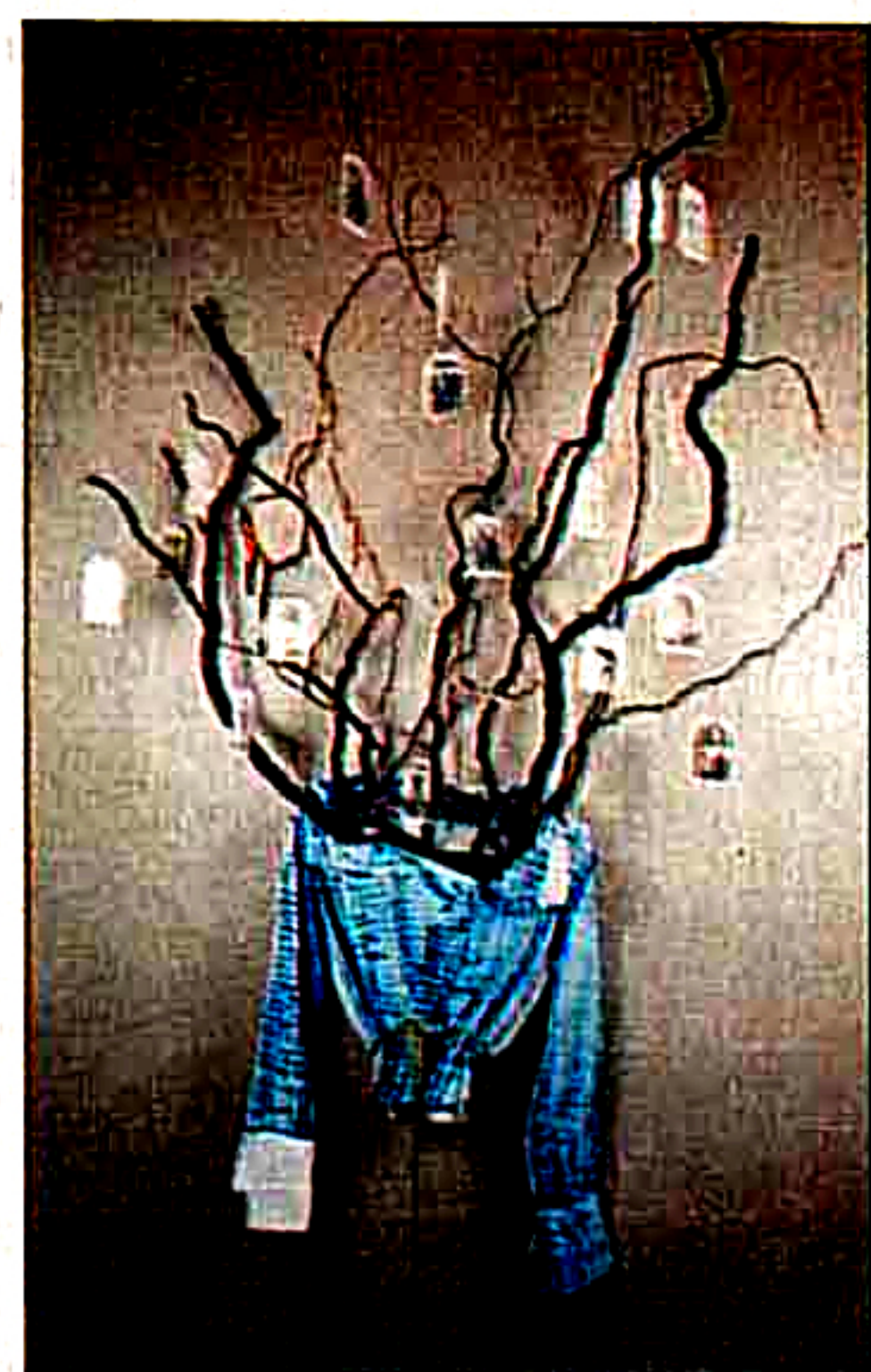


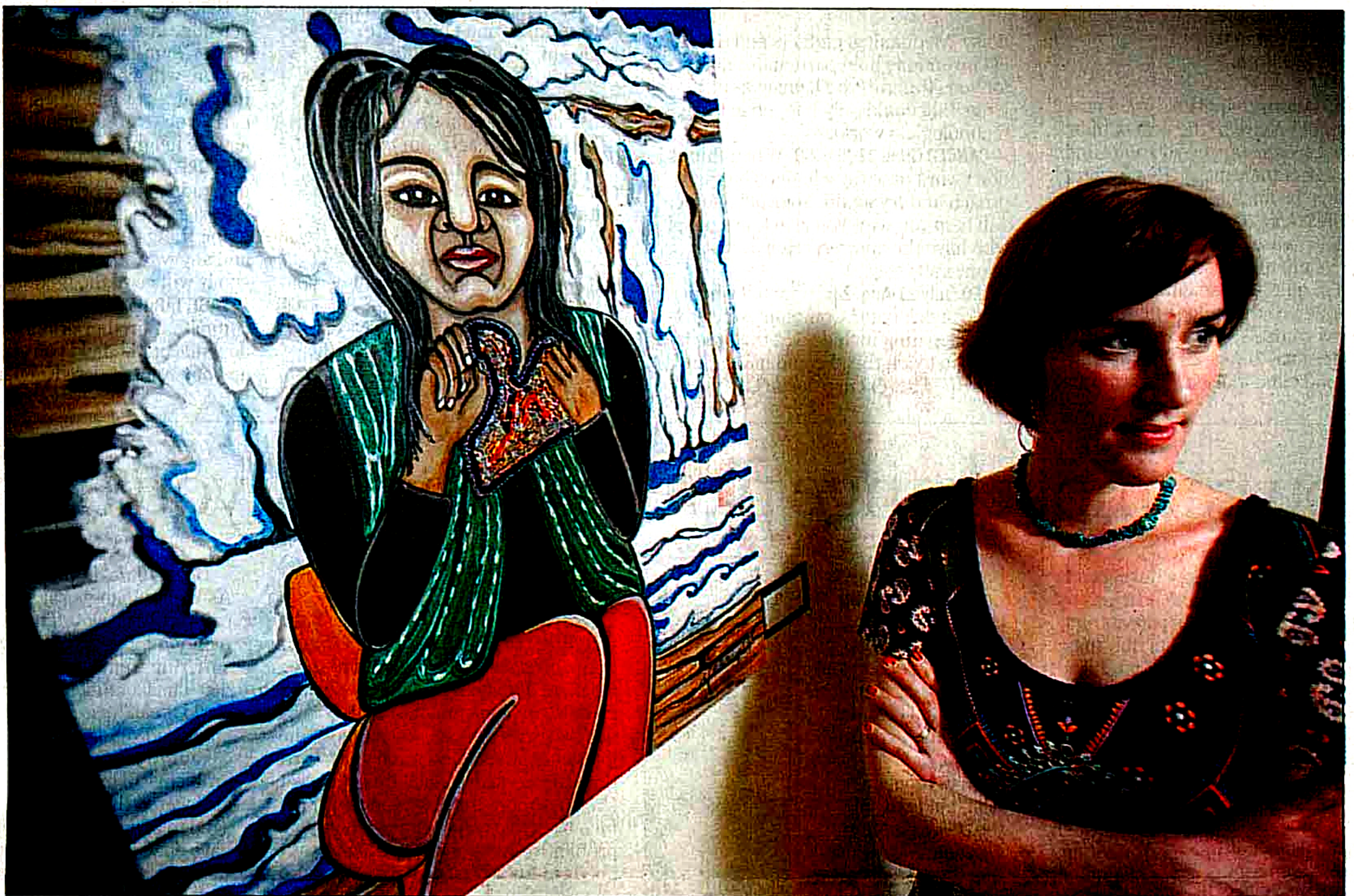
# Women embrace art



"Family Tree" by Jeannette Altman explores the importance of heritage and maintaining a connection across generations.

JEANNETTE ALTMAN

## EXHIBIT CELEBRATES THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY



Maureen Andrade, artistic director for "Expressions of Community: Women Embracing Art," got the idea for the Clark County Historical Museum show after painting "Woman at Celilo Falls." ZACHARY KAUFMAN/The Columbian

By MARY ANN ALBRIGHT  
Columbian staff writer

The joys of creating families, the pain of losing loved ones, and the injustices of sexism all color the experiences of women throughout history. Ten artists explore these themes in an exhibit at the Clark County Historical Museum through April.

The exhibit, which marks the centennial of women achieving the right to vote in Washington state, features paintings, photography, fiber arts and sculptures.

"The show is looking at how women voice their opinions through art," said Susan Tissot, the museum's executive director. "All these different artists do this in a different way and have a different focus. It illustrates how women help shape the greater community."

The inspiration for the exhibit was an acrylic-on-canvas painting with beading detail by Vancouver artist Maureen Andrade titled "Woman at Celilo Falls." Andrade has always been fascinated by Celilo Falls and the local American Indian culture. She spent 60 hours researching and creating the piece, a nod to the tribal fishing area on the Columbia River submerged by the construction of The Dalles Dam in the 1950s.

"Something was stolen from this group of people that can never be replaced," said the 34-year-old mother of two and Clark College nursing student.

Andrade modeled the woman in her painting after someone from the 1920s, but placed her in contemporary clothes to make her more relatable. The subject is doing bead work in the painting, which gave Andrade an opportunity to try her hand at the craft.

Andrade's experience with this piece inspired her to organize "Expressions of Community: Women Embracing Art." Acting as artistic director as well as a participant, she invited primarily Vancouver artists working across a range of media to join the exhibit. They provide commentary through their craft on women's social, political and cultural issues.

### Art centers on family

Many of the pieces focus on the importance of family, including the



ZACHARY KAUFMAN/The Columbian  
Traci Donahue's "La Pintora" is a tribute to painter Frida Kahlo.



ROBERTA COOK  
"Woman on the Rise" by Roberta Cook depicts a woman breaking through the glass ceiling.

mixed-media creation "Family Tree," which makes use of actual salvaged branches from a curly willow tree.

Artist and genealogy enthusiast Jeannette Altman got the idea for "Family Tree" from a dream. Altman, an instructional technician in the fine arts department at Washington State University Vancouver, had envisioned the branches springing forth from a shirt, and set about to make that happen.

She fashioned a seersucker shirt patterned after an old armistice blouse. Altman printed images of

census records chronicling her family's history onto the blouse.

From the tree branches she hung photos of her ancestors, helping her feel connected to generations of women.

"When I think about women, I think about where we came from, what has been available to me that wasn't to our grandmothers. I think about how our lives are the same, how they're different, and how my daughter's life will be different," Altman said.

### Women rise

Salmon Creek quilter Roberta Cook has lived long enough to see some of those changes firsthand. Cook worked in the banking industry off and on from the 1940s to the 1970s, and recalls receiving less pay than men for equal work.

She illustrates the challenge of breaking through the corporate glass ceiling with "Woman on the Rise," one of several quilts by Cook included in the exhibit.

The piece, accompanied by a poem Cook penned, greets museum visitors descending into the lower-level exhibit. It shows "an ambitious young woman who hits a lot of closed doors, then rises to the top," Cook said.

In some ways, it's autobiographical.

"My husband calls it my women's lib quilt, but it might as well be my life," she said.

Many of Cook's quilts are inspired by politics or social issues.

"I just get in a mood and something irritates me, and I take off for the sewing room," she said.

### Artist rejects ideal

Body-image pressures are an irritation for Scappoose, Ore., basket weaver and fiber artist Pat Courtney Gold. She grew up playing with stuffed animals, but her younger sister had Barbie dolls.

"I thought they were awful," Gold said. "They're tall and skinny, and they emphasize the importance of clothes and how you look. I thought that was a terrible image to give to young women."

So Gold created "Anti-Barbie Doll," inspired by Venus figurines. "To me, a woman's form should

### If you go

■ **What:** "Expressions of Community: Women Embracing Art," an exhibit marking the centennial of women achieving the right to vote in Washington state.

■ **When:** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays through April 30.

■ **Where:** Clark County Historical Museum, 1511 Main St., Vancouver.

■ **Cost:** \$4; \$3 for seniors and college students with identification; \$2 for children 6-18; free for children 5 and younger and Clark County Historical Society members; \$10 for a family of four. Free from 5-9 p.m. March 4 and April 1 for Museum After Hours.

■ **Information:** 360-993-5679, <http://www.cchmuseum.org>.

# Art:

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emphasize hips and boobs," said Gold, who wove the doll's head out of cattail leaf fiber to show humanity's connection to the Earth.

Gold, a member of the Wasco tribe honored by the National Endowment for the Arts with a heritage award in 2007, said she comes from a long line of anti-Barbie women.

"I come from a culture where women have always been strong," she said of her matriarchal tribe.

## Strength inspires

Women's strength also provides inspiration for Vancouver

sculptor Traci Donahue, who has two nearly 5-foot-tall pieces on display at the museum.

"I like to celebrate women in my work," she said.

One woman receiving tribute from Donahue is Frida Kahlo, captured in the sculpture "La Pintora."

"She is one of my favorite painters," Donahue said. "With all the hardships she went through, she kept going. I appreciate her as a painter, and also as a strong, strong woman."

Kahlo's rise to success despite battling polio and suffering serious injuries in a bus crash is well known, but Donahue also finds inspiration in everyday women whose achievements sometimes go unsung.

"I try to really push the strength of women in my work," she said. "Women are strong because they have to be."