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State Historical Society's Sioux Horse Effigy among featured artifacts in exhibit at Metropolitan Museum of Art

PIERRE, S.D. -- South Dakota's own Sioux Horse Effigy, an artifact from the collection of the Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre, is now on display through May 10 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

"The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky," an exhibition of Plains Indian masterworks, has already been displayed in Paris at musée du quai Branly and at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City.

The effigy, which also serves as the logo of the South Dakota Historical Society, is capturing special attention. New York Times reviewer Holland Cotter made special mention of it in his March 12 review of the exhibition:

"[It's]... direct, candid gaze is unshakable and unforgettable. So is an image, carved in wood some 30 or 40 years later by a Hunkpapa Lakota artist of a horse apparently dying in battle. Now in the collection of the South Dakota State Historical [Society], the figure was conceived as a tribute to a beloved animal killed under fire. ... In a history of great sculpture, past and present, from the North American continent, it has a place in the highest pantheon."

The exhibit is notable for its more than 130 works of art from 57 European, Canadian and American institutions and private collections being displayed in an unprecedented continuum from pre-contact to the present-day. Featured works include numbers of the great early Plains Indian robes, and other masterworks collected in the 18th century by European explorers and taken back to the continent never to return to America until now.

"I've seen the effigy on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art," commented Jay D. Vogt, director of the South Dakota State Historical Society. "It is beautifully and majestically displayed. We are delighted to see it earn such high praise from Holland Cotter, the notable New York Times art critic. In Pierre, we've always believed in its historical importance, and we are happy to see others placing it in the 'highest pantheon' of great North American sculpture."

A small display about the effigy's travels is currently available at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre, but a much larger celebration is being planned for the return of the artifact this fall.

“Mark your calendars now for Oct. 10-12,” commented Jay Smith, museum director of the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center. “We will soon be announcing a weekend full of activities surrounding the return of the great Sioux Horse Effigy.”

Editor’s Note: South Dakota State Historical Society Director Jay D. Vogt, right, stands by the Sioux Horse Effigy with Daniel Kershaw, exhibition design manager for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. (Photo courtesy South Dakota State Historical Society)

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The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society’s world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.