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New Beach Museum of Art exhibition features Native American pieces from collection of Phillipsburg's Dennis and Carola Deschner

MANHATTAN — Critical moments of change within the distinct and vibrant artistic traditions of the Navajo and Pueblo communities in the Southwest are featured in a new exhibition opening Oct. 28 at Kansas State University's Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art.

"Earth and Loom: A Century of Native American Art from the Collection of Dennis and Carola Deschner" features objects that are part of a promised gift to Beach Museum of Art from the Deschners, who are from **Phillipsburg**. The exhibition was organized by the Dane G. Hansen Foundation with support from the Deschners and the Beach Museum of Art.

"The Deschners' collection illustrates how Native American design evolution was influenced by shifting relationships among artists and collectors during the critical period following the Gadsden Purchase in 1854 — when the United States acquired territory from Mexico that eventually became part of Arizona and New Mexico," said Nancy Mahaney, guest curator for the exhibition. "Increasing Anglo-American immigrations into the Southwest and the gradual development of a tourist market fueled artistic innovation and design evolution."

Mahaney, who was born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation Capital, has degrees in anthropology, museum studies, community and regional planning, and is pursuing a PhD in environmental design and planning at Kansas State University.

Mahaney notes that the Pueblo communities in New Mexico and Arizona are descended from the Ancestral Pueblo people who have been making pottery for thousands of years. The archaeological record of the region shows change and innovation in pottery designs through time and across regions. Similarly, within Navajo weaving design there have been moments of major change, often sparked by social or political events.

"Innovations in the Pueblo pottery tradition were often initiated by individual potters who found inspiration in ancestral forms and designs," Mahaney said. "Two of the best known, Nampeyo, of Hano, and Maria Martinez, inspired generations of artists by respecting cultural traditions and ancestral inheritance while expressing their artistic creativity through new forms and designs." The exhibition includes pottery by Maria Martinez and Nampeyo's daughter Fannie.

"The earliest Navajo weavers used finely spun yarn to create wearing blankets that were prized trade items for hundreds of years before the Anglo-American expansion brought tourists by car and rail," Mahaney said. "After the establishment of the reservation, weavers began creating for a new market and the regional style of Navajo rug was born. New design layouts accommodated changes in weaving functions. Innovation within Navajo

weaving has resulted in the expansion of the palette from four or five basic colors to hundreds of colors commonly drawn from native plants found on the Navajo reservation."

The Deschners began collecting Native American art by chance. During a trip to Colorado they purchased their first Navajo weaving. Later they bought a few pieces of Pueblo jewelry and pottery. These first pieces formed the seeds of their collection and spurred an interest in learning more about their new acquisitions.

"Earth and Loom: A Century of Native American Art" runs through Dec. 21.

The Beach Museum of Art is on the southeast corner of the Kansas State University campus at the corner of Anderson Avenue and 14th Street. Admission is free. The museum is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday; and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Free parking is available adjacent to the building. For more information, call 785-532-7718 or visit <http://beach.k-state.edu>.

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