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**American Masterpieces:
Artistic Legacy of California Indian Basketry
Premieres in Sacramento**

Special exhibit opens at The California Museum

SACRAMENTO – *American Masterpieces: Artistic Legacy of California Indian Basketry* exhibition will open at The California Museum on March 14, 2009. This exhibit of over 80 California Indian baskets from the vast collection held by California State Parks, will be on display through early 2010. Many of these exquisite baskets will be on public view for the first time.



The exhibit is presented by California State Parks and the California Arts Council with funding from a National Endowment for the Arts American Masterpieces grant. It features the evolution of Native American basketry in California, a functional artistic tradition 5,000 years in the making. Rooted in a way of life that relied on baskets for survival, native California baskets were strong, durable, versatile, lightweight, and often watertight. Using materials found within their natural environment, native people used baskets in every activity of life including food gathering, social and ceremonial needs. Over time a market had developed for the acquisition of finely made “art” baskets.

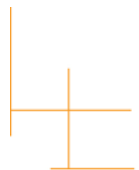


“By the turn of the 19th century, California Indian basketry had become one of the most highly developed, and sought after traditional art forms in America,” exhibit curator Brian Bibby explained. “The remarkable integrity of techniques and materials, visually stimulating designs, variety of form, and graceful sculptural qualities placed basketry at the forefront of a burgeoning art market, with thousands of pieces collected by museums and art connoisseurs throughout the nation.”



The innate beauty, usefulness, boundless variety, and universal quality of Native basketry throughout California – regardless of environment –reveals masterful technical traditions and artistry in these “American Masterpieces.”

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Notes to Editor:

Exhibit curator Brian Bibby and State Indian Museum curator Ileana Maestas are available for interviews. Contact Pati Brown to arrange interviews: (916) 417-1159 or pati@parks.ca.gov.

High resolution digital images of selected “American Masterpieces” baskets are available. For images, please contact Mary Beth Barber at (916) 322-6588 or mbarber@cac.ca.gov.

More information is available on the following websites:

www.parks.ca.gov/cihc/basketexhibit

www.cac.ca.gov/indianbaskets

www.californiamuseum.org

About The California Museum

The California Museum – home of the California Hall of Fame and California Legacy Trails – engages, educates and enlightens people about California’s rich history and its unique contribution to the world through ideas, innovation, art and culture. Through captivating, interactive and innovative experiences, the Museum seeks to inspire men, women and children to dream the California dream and dare to make their mark on history. Open Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. Noon-5 p.m.; Adults \$8.50, Students/Seniors (with valid I.D.) \$7, Children 6-13 \$6.00; Free for Children 5 and Younger. Parking is free on the weekends.
www.CaliforniaMuseum.org.