

# Lewis & Clark Bicentennial ArtsPlan

<http://www.nefa.org/projinit/lewisclark.html>

**WHAT:** *EPICENTER*: A community-based art project for the Lewis and Clark National Signature Event, Hartford, Illinois

**WHEN:** May 14-16, 2004 All Day

**WHERE:** Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, Hartford, IL  
(20 minutes east of St. Louis, directions below)

**WHO:** Lewis & Clark Bicentennial ArtsCorps lead artist Karen McCoy, with regional artist Matthew Dehaemers

**CONTACT:** Liesel Fenner, 617.951.0010, [lfenner@nefa.org](mailto:lfenner@nefa.org)  
Don Rice, 314.340.6845, [donald.rice@ded.mo.gov](mailto:donald.rice@ded.mo.gov)

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NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS



From 2003-2006, events are taking place across the country in a national Bicentennial commemoration of Lewis and Clark's historic, cross-country expedition. **The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial ArtsPlan** is designed to integrate and promote the role of the arts as part of this national commemoration.



Karen McCoy, (lead artist) was selected from a national call-to-artists, and Matthew Dehaemers was selected as a regional partner artist. The artists have created a site-specific temporary sculpture in consultation with the Native American tribes of the region.

The *Epicenter* sculpture honors the Native Americans who made their homes in the southern Illinois region two hundred years ago. While *Epicenter* was designed as a reflection on the artists' research and experiences visiting the Shawnee and Peoria, other tribes such as the Delaware, Illinois, Kaskaskia, Kickapoo, Mascoutin, Miami, Piankashaw and Wea, also lived or hunted there in historic times. Other local artists and community members currently living in southern Illinois and St. Louis have also assisted in the project.

**Artist's Statement:** The confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers created natural abundance and was the center of a vast native civilization. Euro-centered historical thinking tends to consider the movement associated with this area as being east to west, but our continent's first inhabitants consider this region an epicenter. It is a place that once had elaborate religious practices, extensive trade networks and immense earthworks. Considering rivers as connecting arteries within this landscape, the Lewis and Clark ArtsPlan artists have cast a twelve foot long dugout canoe made of frozen Mississippi River water. It holds a cargo of corn and sits on top of an uprooted corn stalk surface. During this event the canoe will slowly melt, evaporate and disappear. As it melts, it will deposit the corn in a mound atop the uprooted corn stalks. The canoe's diminishing presence may be likened to the Native Americans, who no longer have the considerable presence they once had in the middle west of this continent. The uprooted stalks speak of the upheaval of tribal families as they were pushed out of their homelands east of the Mississippi River two hundred years ago. Corn has a ceremonial significance in many civilizations and here, is used as a metaphoric material to convey notions of growth, vitality and sustenance. Many tribes have survived and are today experiencing a cultural renewal. The sculpture emphasizes remembering the past in order to create a better future. It contains a gesture of hope for the vitality of the Shawnee, Peoria and other Native American nations' cultures. With the metaphor of growth it poses the possibility of establishing better relationships among *all* peoples and between human beings and the natural environment.

**Sponsors:** *Epicenter* was sponsored by the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial ArtsPlan, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts in collaboration with the Missouri Arts Council. The program is administered by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and the New England Foundation for the Arts. Special thanks to Shawnee and Peoria Nations, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, Hartford, IL, the Madison County Arts Council, Polarville Cold Storage, East Saint Louis, IL, Sun Belt Rentals, Granite City, IL and the Lewis and Clark Community College, Godfrey, IL.

## DIRECTIONS

**From the West and St. Louis:** Take I-270 East to Route 3 North. Take Rt. 3 to New Poag Road. Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center is located the intersection of New Poag Road and Illinois Route 3.

**From the East:** Take I-270 West to Route 3 North. Take Rt. 3 to New Poag Road. Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center is located the intersection of New Poag Road and Illinois Route 3.