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### **Local Artist Wins International Competition, Signs Contract**

(Ashland, OR) June 17, 2009 - With the economy in a slump most artists' careers are languishing. Not so for Ashland artist and Public Arts Commissioner, Melissa Markell. Two of her works were selected in the "Best of Mixed Media and New Media" category in "Celebrate HerStory", an online juried art competition sponsored by Manhattan Arts International. Soon after, Markell was contacted by Minnesota-based art licensing agent, Lowell Thompson of American Art Images, to sign a contract.

In its sixth year, the Manhattan Arts International "Celebrate HerStory" competition drew approximately 1,000 entries from around the world. An exhibition of the winning works will be displayed June 10 through September 10, 2009 on the Manhattan Arts International website: [www.manhattanartsinternational.com](http://www.manhattanartsinternational.com) . Winning artists receive national and international exposure. The entries were judged upon how well they expressed the "HerStory" theme, originality, innovation and technical expertise.

Markell, a chairperson for the Ashland Public Arts Commission from 2007-2009, has been instrumental in creating a public arts master plan for the city of Ashland during the past four years. She has been creating custom commissioned collage/mixed media artwork for the hospitality industry, cruise lines, corporations and private collectors for the past fifteen years. Her clients include the Beverly Hills Hilton Hotel, Toyota Motor Corp., Samsung, Concentric Network, Monaco Hotels, St Francis Hotel in San Francisco, Del Coronado Hotel on Coronado Island, Teleflora, Kaiser Hospitals, Shades of Green Resort in Orlando, Florida and many more.

Markell specializes in custom work, often theme oriented, telling a story or portraying a specific time in history. Her work is created using vintage imagery that she has collected - handmade papers, found objects, old maps, postcards, "just about anything that provides the right feel and texture for the piece". Melissa Markell's work can be viewed at: [www.melissamarkell.com](http://www.melissamarkell.com)