

Previews of Works For Sale at Upcoming Shows

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WESTERN ART

C O L L E C T O R



Call of the Wild

The Southeastern Wildlife Exposition welcomes artists and more for its 34th annual event celebrating nature.



Art lovers at the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition preview gala live auction in 2015.



Patrons can expect VIP events and exclusive art previews at this year's Southeastern Wildlife Exposition. Photo by Paul Mulkey Images.



For John Banovich, the animals he paints aren't ones he chooses—they choose him. Painting animals allows him to fall into a rhythmic dance, the artist says, as the living, breathing and awe-inspiring creatures pull the artist and viewers in with the presence of life. For wildlife fans who aren't always able to get up close and personal with animals, such as towering bears, majestic elk and mammoth marine life, the 34th annual *Southeastern Wildlife Exposition*, February 12 through 14 in Charleston, South Carolina, gives art lovers a glimpse into animal-filled worlds depicted by Banovich and more than 100 other wildlife artists.

"I feel privileged to capture animals' stories," says Banovich, based in Carnation, Washington, who was the 1998 event's featured artist. "Painting a wild beast makes me feel as if I am paying homage to them. It is starkly apparent nearly every large wild species on earth is experiencing a decline in population. Wildlife one day will only be experienced in captivity, on film and on canvas. I feel a great responsibility to document how, as a society, we feel about our time on earth, living beside 'big things with big teeth.'"

Southeastern Wildlife Exposition includes artist booths, conservation education and sporting demonstrations, as well as the Quick Draw/Speed Sculpt Friday, February 12 at



Guy Crittenden, *Blue Bounty*, oil on canvas, 24 x 36"



Kyle Sims, *Power and Grace*, oil, 38 x 50"

Greg Beecham, *Marsh Glory*, oil, 12 x 9"

Charleston Place. A live auction follows the hour-long Quick Draw/Speed Sculpt, where patrons can bid on finished artworks. Conservationist Jack Hanna will also make an appearance at the event.

This year's Featured Artist, Kyle Sims, has been painting wildlife art for the past 19 years. He will exhibit the show's Featured Painting, a stunning piece called *Power and Grace*, which depicts a bear atop rushing waters. Sims shares Banovich's concern for species' survival and hopes to bring awareness for conservation through his art.

"Like most wildlife artists might say, I am worried about the future of this planet," Sims, based in Belgrade, Montana, says. "For our own well-being we do need to conserve our undeveloped places and keep them that way. One way is to raise money and then buy those lands and put them into a conservation easement, but you can also increase awareness through means such as art. It is my hope I can contribute in this way."

Southeastern Wildlife Exposition president Jimmy Huggins is another wildlife lover who got involved in the event in its first year in 1983 as a volunteer. After becoming executive director a few years later, he became president in 1991 and has seen the event grow from 5,000 attendees in its first year to more than 40,000, and from 100 exhibitors to more than 350 total now. Huggins says organizers strive to keep the show fresh by inviting new artists



John Banovich, *Legends of the 9th Green*, oil on Belgian linen, 18 x 24"

every year to join the dozens of returning artists. Artists and artwork are juried by a panel looking for quality and diversity.

"I think a lot of people relate to nature or want to be part of the wildlife culture, and they don't always have the opportunity to get out physically," Huggins says. "They get to do it in the art at the event, which I think will open a new view into wildlife, what it stands for and what it means for this world." 🍂

Southeastern Wildlife Exposition

When: February 12-14, 2016

Where: Multiple venues in Charleston, South Carolina

Tickets: General admission, \$15-\$25 per day; three-day passes, \$50; VIP packages start at \$200 for two people.

Information: (843) 723-1748, www.sewe.com