

INSIDE Prix de West • State of the Art: Oklahoma • Women of the West • Tulsa

*Previews of Works For Sale at Upcoming Shows* JUNE 2018

# WESTERN ART

## COLLECTOR

130





Crowds gather in the main hall for the *Prix de West* in 2017.

# The Greatest West

Artists from around the country convene in Oklahoma City to immortalize the Western way of life in art.

**M**any versions of the West exist. Stack them against each other and they look like genres on a bookshelf: mysteries, dramas, action adventures, romances, historical memoirs, anthropologic studies, pulp thrillers, nature and wildlife, architecture and travel. Each one offers a different, and very tiny, perspective on the American West. Stand back far enough and these little stories start to reveal larger ideas, grander visions and more complete narratives. They illuminate the Western way of life from every angle.

Nowhere is this more evident than at the *Prix de West*, one of the premier Western art events in the country. The *Prix*, organized and hosted by the National Cowboy &

Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, brings together more than 100 top artists working today to allow them to proclaim the magnificence of the West. This year's show, which opens June 8, will once again present masterworks from many rising young stars, respected veterans and everyone in between.

"Our 46<sup>th</sup> annual *Prix de West* exhibition and sale is both a visual and social showcase of how the museum celebrates the American West through incredible art," says museum president and CEO Natalie Shirley. "It is our honor to host famed principle artists along with their paintings and sculptures of the highest quality found in today's studios, galleries and museums."

Artists at this year's show include Greg

Beecham, Tom Browning, Ken Carlson, Tim Cox, Luke Frazier, Walt Gonske, Bruce Greene, Martin Grelle, Logan Maxwell Hagege, George Hallmark, T. Allen Lawson, Jeremy Lipking, Dean Mitchell, John Moyers, Kyle Polzin, Howard Post, Jason Rich, R.S. Riddick, Mian Situ, Morgan Weisting and many others. The exhibition presents a stunning variety of Western-themed work: from mesmerizing still lifes by William Acheff and Kyle Polzin, to thoughtful cowboy scenes by Bill Anton and Glenn Dean, to beautifully rendered landscape scenes by George Carlson and Curt Walters.

Events kick off on June 8 with an opening reception and awards banquet, followed up on June 9 by several artist-led seminars



Glenn Dean, *Down From the Mesa*, oil, 32 x 32"



Josh Elliott, *Spiral of Time*, oil, 32 x 40"



Mian Situ, *Blasting a Route through the Sierra Nevada Mountains, 1865, Central Pacific Railroad*, oil on canvas, 48 x 32"



Luke Frazier, *Honor Guard*, oil, 28 x 36"



Benjamin Wu, *On the Oregon Trail*, oil on linen, 36 x 56"

followed by another reception and the fixed-price, by-draw sale, which brings out collectors from all around the country as they vie to get these important works in their personal collections. As with many museum exhibitions of this caliber, visitors are strongly encouraged to speak with the artists, discuss their works and dive headfirst into the stories they're telling.

Works at this year's show include major new pieces from Lipking, whose previous work was chosen to be included in the permanent collection during the 2014 *Prix de West*. For this year's show, Lipking is bringing a painting inspired by his lakeside cabin in the snow, and two works from the Vermilion Cliffs area, a favorite painting location for the California artist. In *Sagebrush Shepherdess*, he paints a Navajo woman who is tending to her sheep on horseback in a fading twilight landscape. Hagege, a frequent painting buddy of Lipking, tackles a similar subject matter

of Native riders in a stunning Southwestern landscape. Where Lipking's work is more silent and reflective amid the cool evening light, Hagege's *Winds Will Come and Go* is warmer and more vibrant within the intense heat of the desert sun. The two artists' works make for a marvelous pairing.

Elsewhere in the exhibit, Z.S. Liang will present *Personal Bundle*, showing a single Native American figure preparing items for travel. "The Blackfeet had an intricate system of social behavior... They also developed a system of personal and group talismanic paraphernalia bundles. They know that the inanimate objects have no inherent power; the only power that they have is the power given to it by the hand and mind of man," Liang says. "[In this] the Blackfeet opens up his personal bundle in a sacred place to absorb the power in all these special items."

John Coleman will be bringing both bronze works and new oil paintings. One of

the new sculpture works, *The Healer*, shows an older Native American figure clinging to a blanket that is pulled over his head like a hood. The man has a serious expression, but he exudes calmness and strength. "Artistically a medicine man in his simplest form, *The Healer* holds symbols of his power in his hand. The dragonfly cross represents limitless possibilities as the dragonfly is not bound by most rules of nature," Coleman explains. "Many Native American tribes believe that health is an expression of the spirit and the continual process of staying strong spiritually leads to great strength both physically and mentally. I feel the message it conveys is universal on so many levels and very relevant to the world we live in today."

Southern Ute and Navajo artist Oreland Joe, like Coleman, will also be presenting both sculpture and his ledger-inspired oil paintings. In *Ghost Dance Dreamers* are five dancing figures amid an arrangement



**Robert Griffing**, *Cherokee Caravan*, oil on linen, 30 x 50"



**Paul Moore**, *Heartbeat of Mother Earth*, bronze, ed. of 6, 23 x 16 1/8 x 9 1/4"



**George Hallmark**, *Glory*, oil, 48 x 36"



**Logan Maxwell Hagege**, *Winds Will Come and Go*, oil, 38 x 43"

of small symbols that line the edges of the image. "The Ghost Dance was a temporary relief for most Northern and Southern tribes detained to reservations. It brought hope. Hope to restore the old way of life and to bring back the buffalo, the substance of their spiritual, physical and mental well-being," Joe says of the work. "Historical documentation records the largest gathering

of Ghost Dance believers in the fall of 1890 along the Canadian river...This painting represents multiple individuals dancing and singing near the Canadian River, Cheyenne Arapaho reservation 1890...Each dance and singer is within their own medicine. Each is ready to present him or herself to the Creator. Each symbol represents something important to them. It is power, it is thought, it is song

that drove the people in to believing. It was spiritual medicine that drove them in to the dream world of visions."

Fellow sculptor Paul Moore will also be bringing bronzes that tell sacred, and also unique, stories about the people and tribes being depicted. In *The Heartbeat of Mother Earth*, Moore presents a drum circle on a slight tilt, which gives the viewer

a top-down look into the circle. “Native American drums play an important part in tribal ceremonies. They are sacred and the sound of the drum symbolizes the heartbeat of the earth,” Moore says. “As individuals listen and dance to the heartbeat, they find a close spiritual relationship to the creator. The drums are a living and breathing entity whose sound calls out to the spirits to protect and watch over the people. The shape of the drum circle represents the earth and the circle of life.”

In C. Michael Dudash’s *What Tomorrow Brings*, the former illustrator paints several Native American figures illuminated by a glowing campfire. The painting is composed

around a central figure, who is holding the attention of three figures at his side. “Native Americans held their elders and leaders in high esteem, and looked to them for wisdom and guidance as they journeyed through life. These Indian braves are listening intently as their leader talks of times past and what tomorrow will bring,” Dudash says. “Whether he is laying out a plan for the next day’s hunt, or explaining his strategy for an incursion against an enemy, they know that success will depend upon everyone following his counsel.”

Landscape painter Brent Cotton will be showing his own campfire in *Firedance*, as well as a breathtaking landscape scene in

*Under the Tall Cottonwoods*, which is almost tonal in its color as the trees and several deer are lit from behind by intense sunlight that filters through a forest canopy. “This painting was inspired by an early morning stroll on a local wildlife refuge in the Bitterroot Valley, a place I go frequently for ideas and inspiration,” Cotton says. “The works of the Hudson River School were very much on my mind when I painted this.”

Wildlife painter John Banovich takes a more direct approach to animals with his panoramic painting *Symbiosis*, featuring buffalo running through heavy snow and scattering nearby magpies into the cold winter air. “The black-billed magpie has a long and



**John Banovich**, *Symbiosis*, oil on Belgian linen, 12 x 46”



**John Coleman**, *The Healer*, bronze, ed. of 9, 64 x 24 x 17”



**Tom Browning**, *Dreams of Home*, oil, 36 x 20”



**Morgan Weistling**, *The Barbershop*, oil, 34 x 24”



**Z.S. Liang, *Personal Bundle*, oil on linen canvas, 32 x 40"**



**R.S. Riddick, *Special Kind of Freedom*, oil, 30 x 36"**



**G. Russell Case, *Winding Down*, oil, 30 x 24"**



**Brent Cotton, *Firedance*, oil on linen, 18 x 18"**



**Len Chmiel, *Early Bloomer*, oil, 36 x 48"**

sordid history with Native Americans and bison. In this symbiotic relationship, the magpies are often found near bison herds feasting on the ticks and ectoparasites found on the shaggy beasts," he says. "Interesting that the magpie often caches its hoard for consumption at a later date...While the magpie is in the crow family, it is arguably one of North America's most intelligent birds, and also one of its most beautiful. With a long, iridescent colored tail and wing patches, white chest and wingtips, and coal black face it can be found roaming alongside bison herds across the west. While its diet consists mostly of ground dwelling anthropoids, seed and carrion, it does fancy the blood rich taste of bison and elk's parasite nemesis...I wanted to portray the movement through the cold air and deep

powder of these two symbiotic partners."

Landscape painter Josh Elliott turns to the past for his piece *Spiral of Time*, showing an ancient cliff dwelling in Arizona. "Spending time in Canyon de Chelly last November, I saw several aspects of time. I saw the prehistoric geology of the cliffs, the ancient ruins of past civilizations alongside the contemporary culture now occupying the canyon. I then reflected on how the time of year and time of day affected the light and feel of what was before me, but that they were something that happened on a repeated basis. I could see time starting at some point and heading toward another, like a line, but with recurring seasons and sunsets causing the line to pass by itself like a spiral," Elliott says. "Maybe it was just me enjoying this concept; but that was what I pondered while painting

*Spiral of Time.*"

Following the opening weekend events, the *Prix de West* exhibition hangs through August 5 in Oklahoma City. ☞

## Prix de West

**June 8-August 5, 2018**

- Seminars, June 8-9, 10 a.m.
- Preview reception and awards dinner, June 8, 6 p.m.;
- Sale reception, June 9, 5:30 p.m.
- Live auction and closing celebration, June 9, 7:30 p.m.

**National cowboy & Western Heritage Museum**, 1700 Northeast 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73111  
(405) 478-2250,  
[www.nationalcowboymuseum.org](http://www.nationalcowboymuseum.org)