

A New Way for the West

Steamboat Art Museum presents a revolutionary exhibition that chronicles the contemporary Western art scene.



Michael Naranjo, *Flight to Freedom*, 1973, bronze
ed. 12 of 12, 13 x 33 x 13".
Courtesy of Tia Collection,
Santa Fe, NM. James Hart
Photography.

Over the years, the Steamboat Art Museum has hosted many Western-inspired exhibitions featuring living artists in the realist or impressionistic style. However, beginning December 2, they present the groundbreaking exhibition *The New West: The Rise of Contemporary Indigenous and Western Art*, that traces the history of the sub-genre the title suggests, in prominent works from both past and present.

Guest curator for the exhibition and executive director of the Booth Western Art Museum, Seth Hopkins, along with many other experts, feel that the founding of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the early 1960s marked the start of what is known as the New West or Modern West art movement. "Early instructors at the IAIA at the time, Fritz Scholder and Allan Houser, along with their students like Dan Namingha and T.C. Cannon, changed the Western and Indigenous art scene in a big way, and it created a new genre," Hopkins explains.

Artist Kim Wiggins, featured in the exhibition, explains this change as a "contrasting voice to Western realism," and images of the genre are "filled with high-keyed color, intense light, simplified forms and stylized and modern innovation," he says.

The museum presents close to 50 works on loan from regional museums, the Booth Museum, private collections and from the renowned Tia Collection in Santa Fe. Beginning in the 1960s, the exhibition will highlight pieces like Allan Houser's alabaster sculpture *Thinking of Him*, showing a Native American woman with her blanket and hair appearing to be blown back by the wind. "This is an excellent example of Houser's later work," says Hopkins. He was a fairly realist painter in the '30s and '40s, but as a sculptor, became influenced by modern art and started



Allan Houser (1914-1994), *Thinking of Him*, 1980, alabaster,
19 x 20 x 14½". Courtesy of Tia Collection, Santa Fe, NM. James
Hart Photography.



Kim Wiggins,
*Cattle Kings
of the Pecos,*
2012, oil on
canvas,
72 x 96"



T.C. Cannon (1946-1978), *Mandan Warrior*, acrylic on canvas, 26 x 20". The Estate of T.C. Cannon; Courtesy of Tia Collection, Santa Fe, NM. James Hart Photography.

creating minimalist pieces like this. He blazed the trail for artists that came next to do things more modern but within Western subject matter."

To highlight the affect of such iconic masters, the exhibition will display artworks of the present day, as seen in pieces like Kim Wiggins's *Cattle Kings of the Pecos*. "This work was the first painting in a seven-part series focused on the Goodnight-Loving Trail," Wiggins explains. "The massive canvas draws attention to the incredible wealth of history surrounding the Pecos River Valley of Southern New Mexico. The painting focuses on the three great cattle barons of the American West: John Chisum, Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving."

Viewers will also see present day works like *Flight to Freedom* by well-known Santa Clara Pueblo sculptor Michael Naranjo—inspired by the human form and his Native culture. "This is my representation of a Santa Clara Eagle Dancer," Naranjo explains of the piece. "I wanted to try to capture him in motion, balancing on one foot, both wings extended."

Overall, Hopkins feels that viewers of the exhibition will be pretty amazed by the range of artists represented and the diversity of the media and styles. Additional artists in the exhibition include Earl Biss, T.C. Cannon, Dan Namingha, Fritz Scholder, Ed Mell, Shonto Begay, Howard Post, Kevin Red Star and many others. 🐾

The New West: The Rise of Contemporary Indigenous and Western Art

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