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WESTERN ART

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A Return Home

A new exhibition in Scottsdale brings the Cowboy Artists of America back to Arizona for its 50th anniversary.

In honor of the Cowboy Artists of America, Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West is opening a new retrospective exhibition to celebrate the works of the influential Western group as it closes out a year of shows marking the 50th anniversary since its founding in Sedona, Arizona, in 1965.

The exhibition, *A Salute to Cowboy Artists of America and a Patron: 50 Years of Amazing Contributions to the American West*, opens November 7 at the Scottsdale museum, which opened earlier this year in the heart of Scottsdale's bustling arts district. The retrospective will feature one work of art—bronze or painting—from each of the 77 artists who have been members of the prestigious Western group.

Although the exhibition is not the CAA's official 50th anniversary party—that honor went to *Cowboy Crossings* at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in October in Oklahoma—it does mark a return to Arizona for the group, which had held its annual show at the Phoenix Art Museum for 37 years until 2011. The Western Spirit exhibition will cap off a year's worth of anniversary shows from coast to coast.

"It's been a busy year, but I'm real proud of these guys. They've worked night and day to bring their best work and make all these shows great," CAA president and sculptor Bill



In a photograph taken June 23, 1965, at the Oak Creek Tavern in Sedona, Arizona, artists and CAA founders Joe Beeler, left, Charlie Dye, John Hampton, and George Phippen met to discuss forming an art group together. Photo courtesy the Cowboy Artists of America.

Nebeker says. "We're excited about the show in Scottsdale. The public is going to be thoroughly impressed by the works they're going to see."

In addition to the retrospective aspect of the exhibition, the show will also honor the

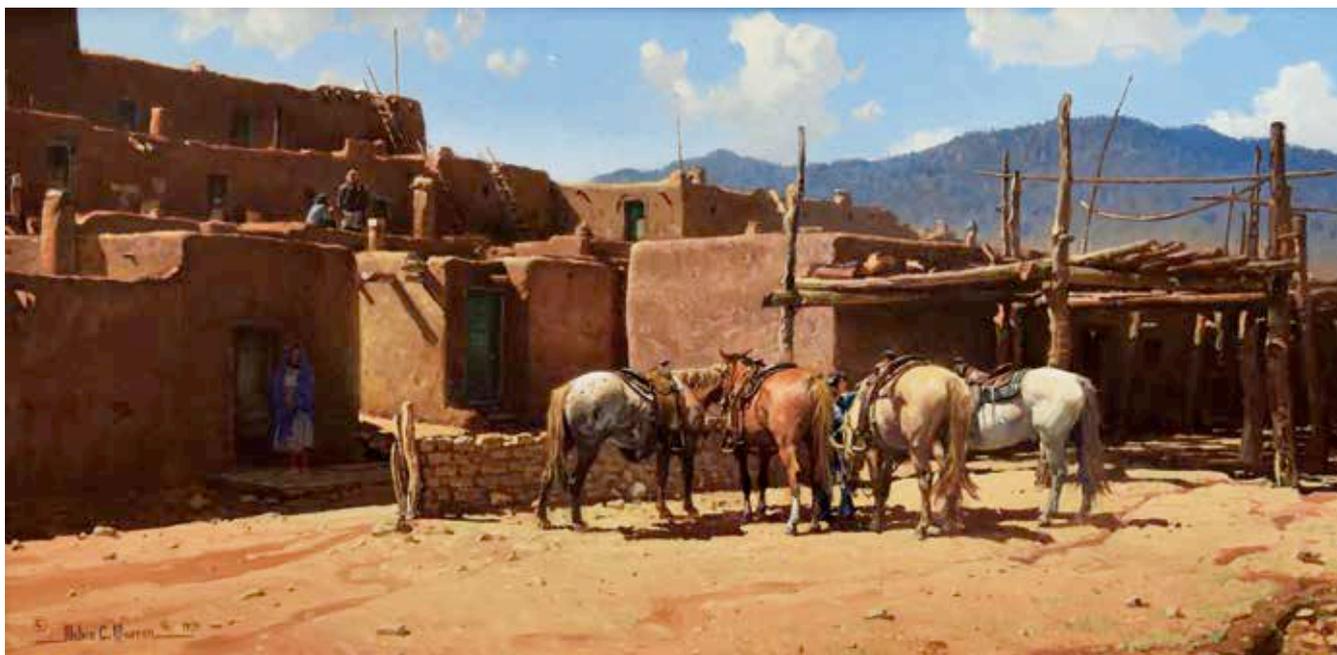
late Eddie Basha, whose 3,500-piece Western collection includes a stunning selection from CAA artists including John Clymer, Howard Terpning, Martin Grelle, Bruce Greene, Bill Owen, Joe Beeler, and many others. Basha, a well-known and widely respected owner of a grocery chain bearing his family name, passed away in 2013. His collection, housed in his company's headquarters in Chandler, Arizona, is open to the public. Nearly 20 works from the Basha collection will be included in the Western Spirit exhibition.

"This show is going to be dedicated to Eddie Basha, a phenomenal businessman and a tremendous supporter of the CAA. He was loved dearly, so it will be fun to see pieces he owned," Nebeker says.

Edward "Trey" Basha, Eddie's son and current CEO of Bashes' Inc., says he and the rest of his family are honored to have some of Eddie's pieces included in the Scottsdale show. "This artwork was very personal to him because



Joe Beeler (1931-2006), *XIT is Born*, 1977, oil, 24 x 48". Photo by Jordan Houston. Courtesy The Eddie Basha Collection.



Melvin Warren (1920-1995), *Pueblo Traders*, 1975, oil, 24 x 48". Photo by Jordan Houston. Courtesy The Eddie Basha Collection.



R.S. Riddick, *Song to the Horizon Maker*, 2004, oil on linen, 60 x 50". Photo by Jordan Houston. Courtesy The Eddie Basha Collection.

he greatly admired the artists who made it, and because he was friends with them as well," Trey says. "He would be thrilled these pieces are going to be seen in this show."

One of the highlights from the Basha collection in the exhibition is Beeler's *XIT is Born*, showing a group of cowboys standing around a patch of earth trying to decide what their cattle brand will look like. Beeler describes the piece in a description affixed to the back of the painting: "This painting depicts the first herd of South Texas cattle delivered to what was to be, the XIT Ranch at Buffalo Springs. Not having arrived at a brand yet, the crew stood around Abe Blocker, the trail boss, and 'Barbeque' Campbell, the ranch foreman at the time, and Abe drew on the ground the now famous XIT brand. The brand stood for 10 counties in Texas and was chosen for its difficulty to vent or change. This was a historic moment in range history."

The painting is noteworthy for its wide composition with 13 figures arranged neatly in various positions, but also because it represents Eddie's 40-year friendship with Beeler, who



Howard Terpning, *The Missing Dispatch Case*, 2002, oil, 44 x 42". Photo by Jordan Houston. Courtesy The Eddie Basha Collection.

has a huge presence in the Chandler gallery.

Jody Beeler, Joe's son, says Eddie was an important figure in art because he allowed artists to thrive. "He was a visionary in Western art, and just a great guy all around," Jody says. "It's an astonishing thing for me as a CA son, and my sister as a CA daughter, to grow up

around people like Eddie, and all the artists. There's such longevity to the work. And the passion of the people involved is amazing. Western art is not going away anytime soon."

Other works in the show include Greene's *A Long Way From the Wagon*, Grelle's *A Time to Dance*, David Halbach's watercolor *The*

Pink Parasol, Terpning's *The Missing Dispatch Case*, Kenneth Riley's *Return of the Coldmaker*, Melvin Warren's *Pueblo Traders*, and Paul Moore's bronze *Offering to the Sun*.

John Coleman, who has an extensive array of bronze work that has been promised to the museum's permanent collection, says

he is excited to bring the CAA back to the Phoenix area.

“The Cowboy Artists of America has spent over 40 years at the Phoenix Art Museum before moving its annual show to the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City five years ago. For our group to have the opportunity to connect with Arizona friends again and to celebrate our 50th anniversary at the new Western Spirit museum in Scottsdale with a Cowboy Artists of America retrospective show is very exciting. I’m sure this is going to be a first-class homecoming. Everything this museum stands for, from its impressive architecture to its collection of art and artifacts, exemplifies the culture and spirit of what the CAA stands for,” Coleman says. “Art isn’t created in a vacuum, so which is more important: the art or the collector? I don’t believe you can have one without the other. Art is created to be shared. Collectors, like artists, vary in their prominence, and thus their influence on the art world in general. Collectors like Eddie Basha had a profound impact on Western art because not only was he a collector and a patron, but through his museum shared his world-class Western art collection with the public. To be in such a collection is the dream of most artists.”

The retrospective exhibition will be on exhibit through May 31, 2016. 🐾

A Salute to Cowboy Artists of America and a Patron: 50 Years of Amazing Contributions to the American West



When: November 7, 2015-May 31, 2016

Where: Western Spirit: Scottsdale’s Museum of the West, 3830 N. Marshall Way, Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Information: (480) 686-9539,
www.scottsdalemuseumwest.org

PHOTO BY BILL TIMMERMAN. COURTESY STUDIO MA, ARCHITECT

Byron Wolfe (1904-1973), *Cuttin’ Out a Choice Cow*, 1966, watercolor, 9 x 12”.
Photo by Jordan Houston. Courtesy The Eddie Basha Collection.



Kenneth Riley (1919-2015), *Return of the Coldmaker*, 1999, oil, 42 x 48”.
Photo by Jordan Houston. Courtesy The Eddie Basha Collection.

