

Q&A

with Tom Ryan, 2008 Sale Chairman



Tom Ryan feels right at home at the helm of the 2008 Cowboy Artists of America Sale & Exhibition. As a native Arizonan, he has always been immersed in the culture of the American West. In his role as chairman of the CAA show, he has the opportunity to merge his fondness for the West, his love of the arts and his penchant for a good time.

Ryan, who works in the commercial real estate business by day, shares his love of the West with wife Barb and their two children.

Q How did you get involved with MAC?

A I was introduced to MAC through a long-time family friend and work colleague five years ago. I had wanted to get involved and give something back to our great community, and because I have an appreciation for art and Phoenix Art Museum, it was a perfect fit.

Q What made you want to get involved with the CAA Sale?

A Since joining MAC, I was automatically attracted to the CAA Sale & Exhibition because of the energy, excitement and fabulous art. The history of the CAA has always fascinated me. The Western culture has always been a part of my life.

Q Do you collect Western American art?

A I would love to begin a collection at some point. I have always favored the bronzes, and I would start my collection there.

Q Do you especially admire the work of some CAA members?

A I hold the art of all the CAA members in high regard because they are each unique in some way. If I was forced to choose, I guess I'd begin my bronze collection with works of Bill Nebeker, John Coleman or Mehl Lawson. I also enjoy the paintings of Bill Owen, John Moyers and Fred Fellows.

Q What are your plans for the 2008 Sale?

A This year, we're working to maintain the energy and excitement, as always, and increase the number of buyers by taking a more targeted marketing approach. My goal is to make the Sale an enjoyable experience for all and, of course, sell out the art!

Q What can guests look forward to at this year's Sale?

A I really want to add more of a western flavor to the Sale and make it a very entertaining evening for all. We're paying attention to all the details to make the show a well-run and comfortable experience. We hope to see you there in October!

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Right of Passage, Clark Kelley Price, 2007. Oil on canvas, 36" x 48". Courtesy of the artist.



TALES

from the

TRAIL

SPRING 2008 caashow.org

IN THE STUDIO with Bill Nebeker

Have you ever pondered a work of art and longed to know more about its creation, more about the artist's inspiration and the process that brought it to life? We have, which is why we are introducing a new column for the newsletter.

Starting with this issue, "In the Studio" will give you a glimpse of the artists in their most sacred surroundings. We will take a closer look at where and how the artists translate their musings into masterpieces.

CAA President Bill Nebeker's Prescott home is where he both works and plays. He and his father, brother-in-law and wife Merry built his studio on the north end of the house in 1985. The studio, which measures 32 feet long by 30 feet wide, has 15-foot ceilings so it can accommodate Nebeker's larger sculptures. It contains a library, with books about CAA members, American history, working cowboys, Indian tribes, animal and human anatomy, rifles and pistols, hunting stories, and other historically important sculptors and painters. Also, there are collectable saddles, spurs, bits, cowboy hats, guns, Indian knives, arrows, and other beaded clothing items he uses to



Bill Nebeker in his Prescott, Ariz. studio

ensure accurate representation in his work.

"When I am in my studio, I get inspiration from my reference books, western films and photos I have taken on research trips to ranches," said Nebeker. "Sometimes I just get an idea that pops into my imagination and develops into a full-fledged sculpture."

While Nebeker prefers to work alone, in truth his studio sounds more like Grand Central Station than a clichéd artist hideout. When the children were young, Merry would often bring the school art classes for a tour of the studio. Today, although the kids are grown, the tours

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CAA SALE, EXHIBITION a Study in Harmony

To say that Phoenix Art Museum Director Jim Ballinger has seen a lot of CAA Sales is like saying there's a lot of sand in the desert. When he began his career at Phoenix Art Museum in 1974, the Cowboy Artists of America Sale & Exhibition had just moved there from Oklahoma City. Since then, Ballinger has witnessed more than three decades of the event – and the extraordinary partnership that makes it happen.

This annual show is the result of a perfectly orchestrated effort by Men's Arts Council (MAC), CAA and Phoenix Art Museum. MAC, the fundraising organization, provides the hundreds of volunteers that coordinate and execute the event without



Phoenix Art Museum Director Jim Ballinger in the Western American art gallery.

In the Studio, continued from p.1

continue. Various art groups make monthly visits to the Nebeker home and studio.

When he does find the time to sculpt – between trips to the foundry, business in town, art shows and caring for family – Nebeker prefers to work with the television playing an old western movie in the background or listening to old-time music or books on tape.

"I am very unorthodox in my working schedule compared to so many of my artist friends and colleagues," he explained. "I don't work every day in my studio, and there can be weeks that pass between when clay sculptures are being physically worked on."

He does not sketch his ideas as studies

a hitch. The Museum commits to host the exhibition each year, which is the only standing, annual event of its kind there. CAA provides works of art by the most distinguished contemporary Western American artists around.

"My favorite part is the energy that comes from the Museum as an institution, MAC as a volunteer group and CAA as a group of artists all working together for a common goal," said Ballinger. "Doing that for 35 years is an amazing accomplishment."

MAC's contributions to the Museum are also remarkable. Some of the proceeds from the CAA Sale go to the Western American Art Endowment, the corpus of which is more than \$1 million. From its other fundraisers MAC also gives a six-figure donation to the Museum's general operating budget.

"MAC's gifts to the Museum are invaluable," said Ballinger. "MAC is consistent with hard money for the operating budget, which is crucial to the Museum."

Each part of this trio is indispensable when it comes to the CAA Sale & Exhibition. "What makes it special is the ability to hold together the three-legged stool each year," Ballinger concludes. "It's seeing old friends and making new ones."

before beginning sculpting. Instead, he can be in the studio for days looking through reference books and photos or reading histories or watching films. He also heads outdoors to get a better understanding of the movement of the animals.

"It looks like I am not being productive," he joked. "In reality, I am doing my mental and visual imaging until I have a complete picture in my mind of what the new clay sculpture will be."

This is clearly a style that works for him. In his four-decade career, he has completed dozens of sculptures, much to the pleasure of art enthusiasts and collectors around the world.

CAANews



No Place for a Gunset, Bill Owen, 1973. Oil on canvas. 30" x 40". On loan to the "Horse" exhibition from the permanent collection of The Museum of Western Art in Kerrville, Texas.

Horsing Around Owen Work Featured in National Exhibition

Who better to contribute to an exhibition entitled "Horse" than a CAA member? That's what the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York concluded when they asked Bill Owen to participate. The curators, Drs. Ross McPhee and Bruce MacFadden of AMNH, and Dr. Sandra Olsen of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, were impressed by Owen's work. They were seeking a contemporary painting of a cowboy working with his horse that was not overly romanticized. Owen's oil, *No Place for a Gunset*, fit the bill. It is part of the permanent collection at the Museum of Western Art in Kerrville, Texas, which loaned the painting to the exhibition.

"I believe this painting took my career to another level, and to this day, for many people, it's still a favorite of my works," said Owen.

"I am very pleased to have it represent me in an exhibit that is going to last for such a long time and travel so far. I am grateful to the Museum of Western Art for agreeing to loan this painting for so long."

"Horse" explores the human relationship with the horse and the horse's influence on human cultures. A section of the exhibition examines the role of the horse in the American West, with a special look at cowboys.

This traveling exhibition opens in New York on May 17 and will subsequently travel to four other venues: The Field Museum in Chicago; the Abu Dhabi Cultural Center, United Arab Emirates; the San Diego Natural History Museum; and the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau. The exhibit runs through September 2012.

The American Museum of Natural History is a distinguished institution, whose goals include broadening the public's understanding of the scientific and cultural world and increasing knowledge through the research of their curators.

For more information on "Horse," visit www.amnh.org and click "On Exhibit."

Mehl Lawson an Artist, Artisan

While most of us know CAA member Mehl Lawson for his precise, sculptural depictions of cowboys and their horses, many do not know that he is also recognized for his rawhide braiding. Lawson has been inducted



Mehl Lawson's rawhide braiding skills earned him a membership in the TCAA

into the Traditional Cowboy Arts Association (TCAA) for his skill and artistry in braiding rawhide. This makes him the first to be a member of both the TCAA and the CAA. He will participate in his first TCAA Show in September, which will mark the 10th anniversary of the organization.

The TCAA is dedicated to preserving the disappearing skills of saddle making, bit and spur making, rawhide braiding and silversmithing. The mission of the TCAA is to preserve these traditional gear-making skills and impart them to future generations through educational programs.

In addition to his distinguished memberships, Lawson also won a world championship in the American Quarter Horse Association, making him perhaps the only person to achieve such a "triple crown."

Mignery Monument Honors Hashknife Pony Express

In a tribute befitting the legendary Hashknife Pony Express, Herb Mignery unveiled his larger-than-life horse and rider monument on Feb. 1 in Scottsdale, Ariz. Mignery's sculpture honors the spirit of the Hashknife Pony Express, which still delivers mail on horseback from Holbrook to Scottsdale's post office each year.

This year, the Hashknife Pony Express celebrates its 50th anniversary, with Mignery's monument providing a permanent homage to the outfit. It continues to have a long-standing contract with the U.S. Postal Service, delivering mail on horseback since 1958. Its riders are volunteer members of the Navajo County Sheriff's Posse, who make

the 200-mile trek each year to deliver mail to Scottsdale's downtown post office.

Mignery's monument, entitled *Passing the Legacy*, was installed at the Marshall Way cul-de-sac just north of the Arizona Canal in Scottsdale.

Learn more about the Hashknife Pony Express at www.hashknifeponyexpress.com.

SAVE the DATE

43rd Annual Cowboy Artists of America
Sale & Exhibition
at Phoenix Art Museum

Sale Weekend:
Oct. 17 – 18, 2008

Exhibition:
Oct. 18 – Nov. 16, 2008

CAA Members Mark Major Anniversaries

Though each year of membership is a milestone to celebrate for CAA members, the following deserve special mention for their commemorative anniversaries.

35th Bill Owen
30th Bill Nebeker
15th Bruce Greene, Oreland Joe

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Mignery's *Passing the Legacy*

Keeping Current

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