



WESTERN ART PATRONS

Newsletter: Fall, 2019

Tucson Museum of Art and Historic Block
140 N. Main Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85701

Recent Events

Still Lifes, Canyon Views and Silent Z's

October 13, 2019. From a perch in Ventana Canyon, high above the city, over sixty Western Art Patron members and guests convened on Sunday afternoon, October 13th, for the traditional opening event of the Western Art Patrons 2019-2020 calendar. Graciously hosted by Michael Widmer and his fiancée, Karen Downey, in their art-filled mountainside retreat above the Ventana Canyon Golf and Racquet Club, the event featured bottomless libations and elegant hors d'oeuvres presented by Feast. This year's featured guest was Arizona artist Sue Krzyston, a self-taught artist specializing in exquisite still life compositions comprised of Native American artifacts. While the "z" in her name remained silent, the artist waxed eloquently about her evolution as a painter and the personal approach and techniques she uses to produce highly realistic, trompe l'oeil depictions of Native American pottery, bas-



Artist Sue Krzyston

ketry, textiles and beaded work in a manner that accurately captures their unique forms and textures as well as the effects of light and shadow. An honorary artist member of the Mountain Oyster Club in Tucson and a perennial exhibitor at the ***Cowgirl Up!*** show at the Desert Caballeros Western Art Museum in Wickenburg, Arizona, Krzyston's work frequently appears locally at the ***Settlers West Miniature Show***.



WAP members and VIPs imbibing and grinning at the opening event

Western Sublime Exhibition Opens at Tucson Museum of Art

October 18, 2019. An estimated four hundred TMA members and guests attended the opening of the museum's major fall/winter exhibition, ***Western Sublime: Majestic Landscapes of the American West***. The show (running through February 9) includes works of art of the American West that examine the idea of the sublime: an aesthetic ideal with an emotional or spiritual charge that instills awe or inspires fear. Spanning nearly two centuries of artistic production, the exhibition includes paintings, drawings, photography, prints, textiles, and basketry that consider how the sublime landscape is understood and its effect on the peoples, histories, and cultures of the American West. For more on the show, see ***Curator's Corner***, below.



Thomas Moran, ***The Mirage***, 1879, oil on canvas, Purchase of the Nelda C. and H.J. Lutzer Stark Foundation, 1977. Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas

Upcoming Events

Paul Pletka Painting Premiere



Paul Pletka, b. 1949, *La Primera Caida*, 2018, acrylic on linen, 62 x 72 inches
Gift of the Western Art Patrons, Virginia Johnson Acquisition Fund and private donor.

Thursday, November 14, 2019. After a year of breathless anticipation, artist Paul Pletka's *La Primera Caida (The First Fall)* will make its debut at the Tucson Museum of Art at a reception and lecture event hosted by the Western Art Patrons on Thursday, November 14th, from 4:00 to 6:00 P.M., in the Margaret Mooney Hall in the TMA lobby. The artist will introduce his work, address its evolution and symbolism, and discuss his forty-five-year career as an artist.

Acquired last year with funds provided by the Western Art Patrons, the Virginia Johnson Fund and a private donor, the painting represents a major addition to the museum's collection of Western art. TMA is honored to have the artist available for the unveiling of his work, which has been on exhibit at the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art in Santa Fe since its acquisition by TMA last year.

Paul Pletka was born in California in 1949 and raised in Colorado, where he was influenced by the Colorado landscape and by his mother's European Catholic traditions. Now living in Santa Fe, his paintings blend Native American, Mexican and European elements while exploring the intersections of religion and history, as well as imagination and reality. Pletka's work resides in numerous private and public collections including the Albany Museum of Art, Albrecht- Kemper Museum of Art, Albuquerque Art Museum, Autry Museum of the American West, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian and Western Art, Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, New Mexico Museum of Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Phoenix Art Museum, San Antonio Museum of Art, Sangre de Cristo Arts Center, Texas Museum of Art, United States Department of the Interior, and the University of Wyoming Art Museum.

"Pletka sees the Southwest as a multicultural place greatly affected by interwoven histories," writes Glasser Curator of Art of the American West Christine C. Brindza, "and creates work based on research, imagination, and direct experiences. He pursues accuracy in his depictions of clothing, masks, objects, and gestures, while incorporating his own bold color choices and stylistic methods. Though not a member of these societies, he sees himself as an interpreter of these cultures and religious rites. He seeks to provide viewers with deeper understandings of this world, using surrealistic, or dreamlike approaches with strong emotional connection."

Please R.S.V.P by November 4th to the email invitation sent on October 17th to join us for this important event (there is a small fee to cover refreshments).

Scottsdale Art Excursion

Wednesday, January 22, 2020. Your tireless Travel and Events Committee has planned an art-filled pilgrimage to Scottsdale. This glorious bus ride will include stops at the Celebration of Fine Art in Scottsdale, where up to a hundred of the finest working artists from the United States and Canada both exhibit and work on site. Featured artworks will include paintings in acrylic, drawing, encaustic, oil, pastels, and watercolor; sculpture in bronze, metal, stone and wood; jewelry in gold, precious and semi-precious gemstones, metal, mixed media and silver, plus photography, mixed media, and textiles. The bus will also stop in Old Town Scottsdale where participants will have the opportunity to shop, gallery-hop or visit the new ***Maynard Dixon's American West*** exhibition at the Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West.

Cowboy Cantina

Saturday, February 8, 2020. Save the date for our annual Cowboy Cantina, with guest artist Dennis Zieminski.

Wish You Were in Dixie?

March 25-30, 2020. Preparations are underway for a rollicking junket to Georgia and Alabama, where trip participants will visit the Booth Museum of Western Art in Cartersville, Georgia; the High Museum in Atlanta; and the Birmingham Museum of Art in Alabama, as well as private collections featuring art of the American West. Watch for announcements in early November.

Curator's Corner

A Journey to Find the Sublime

The Western Sublime: Majestic Landscapes of the American West exhibition has gone through an extensive evolution from its early concept to opening day. Over four years ago, I began to build the initial idea of the exhibition theme considering how select works of art approach the standard meaning of sublime: an aesthetic ideal with an emotional or spiritual charge that instills awe or inspires fear.



P.A. Nisbet, ***Sovereign Sky***, 2012, oil on linen, Collection of the Tucson Museum of Art. Obtained through the generosity of: Western Art patrons, Medicine Man Gallery, and P.A. Nisbet

Early on, I found that the word sublime was not an easily understood term. Therefore, I decided that its elusive definition was to become part of the show. By examining its histories and artistic interpretations of the 19th century and today, perhaps there is a way to better understand it. Some artists may follow, re-examine, challenge, or reject the philosophies of the sublime that go back to ancient Greece.

As the exhibition continued to take shape, I knew that I did not want the display to be chronological. Contemporary works of art juxtaposed with historic work by Bierstadt and Moran can lead to deeper connections, comparisons, and conversations. Further, it was imperative to include works from the TMA Art of the American West collection. For example, P.A. Nisbet's *Sovereign Sky*, a Western Art Patrons purchase, was a definite addition to the checklist because it provided a direct link between the Romantic painters of the 19th century and today.



Shawn Huckins, *The Last Exit* (Valley of the Yosemite, Erasure No. 27), 2018, Acrylic on canvas, Courtesy of the Artist

My quest for the sublime continued. I explored the landscape work of Indigenous artists. Photography by Cara Romero, textile and basket weavings by Marlowe Katoney and Terrol Dew Johnson, paintings by Shonto Begay and Lone Wolf, and the humorous but meaningful works of Bobby “Dues” Wilson opened a new world about how land, ancestry, technology, and colonialism have impacted Indigenous cultures. I met with Ofelia Zepeda, PhD., Tohono O’odham linguist at the University of

Arizona, about writing poetry in response to the exhibition. Her work added a vital layer.

As the show developed, I found myself going deeper into the material, engaging in a rich learning experience based on how artists view the land and the natural world. I gathered statements from living artists to explain their work and how it worked with the theme. The answers were thoughtful and enlightening. For many, their works are more than sublime—they are life.



Cara Romero, *Evolvers*, 2018, Archival pigment print on Platine Fibre photography paper.
Courtesy of the Artist



Marlowe Katoney, *Monument Valley*, 2018, wool, Courtesy of the Artist and Yun Gee Park Gallery, Tucson, AZ

Did I find a true definition of the sublime through the curation of this exhibition? I found thirty-nine: the vast expressions of artists whose works are on display. As visitors see the latest exhibition, I hope that they, too, go on a journey to discover the sublime for themselves.

Thank you to the Western Art Patrons for their financial support of *The Western Sublime* exhibition. Your contributions make exhibitions like this happen.

-- *Christine C. Brindza*, Glasser Curator of Art of the American West

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