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COWBOYS

WESTERN ART

You Bet Your Booth

WE JOIN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SETH HOPKINS FOR AN EXCLUSIVE TOUR OF THE AWARD-WINNING BOOTH WESTERN ART MUSEUM.

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HERE DO YOU FIND THE BEST ART MUSEUM IN THE COUNTRY? NOT JUST the best Western museum—the best art museum, period. New York, Chicago, L.A.? It might surprise you to learn that in the recent *USA Today* 10Best Readers' Choice Awards the Booth Western Art Museum in Cartersville, Georgia, ranked No. 1.

The Booth was nominated alongside such prestigious museums as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Chicago Art Institute, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. “For us to beat out so many well-known museums is amazing. Nationally we are probably the least-known museum on the entire list, so it’s a win that is kind of like slaying 19 Goliaths all at the same time,” says Booth Museum executive director Seth Hopkins.

The award comes just as the Booth Museum is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its founding by an anonymous local family in July 2000. The museum has welcomed almost a million visitors since it opened in 2003 and became an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution.

You’ll find the 120,000-square-foot museum just north of Atlanta in the historic town of Cartersville. Its collection includes significant historic works and major examples of the best of living artists, those working in historical realism and those on the cutting edge of the more contemporary art of the West. “It’s a great overview of what has been going on in Western art over the past 50 to 60 years,” Hopkins says. Visitors are invited to “See America’s Story” through contemporary Western artwork, a Presidential Gallery, a Civil War art gallery, and an interactive children’s gallery called Sagebrush Ranch.

“We hope Western fans from around the world will come and enjoy what we’ve created and find out why we were recognized as one of the great art museums in America,” Hopkins says. In the meantime, we’ve asked Hopkins to give *C&I* readers an exclusive tour highlighting a dozen of the most beloved pieces in the Booth’s collection.

—Dana Joseph

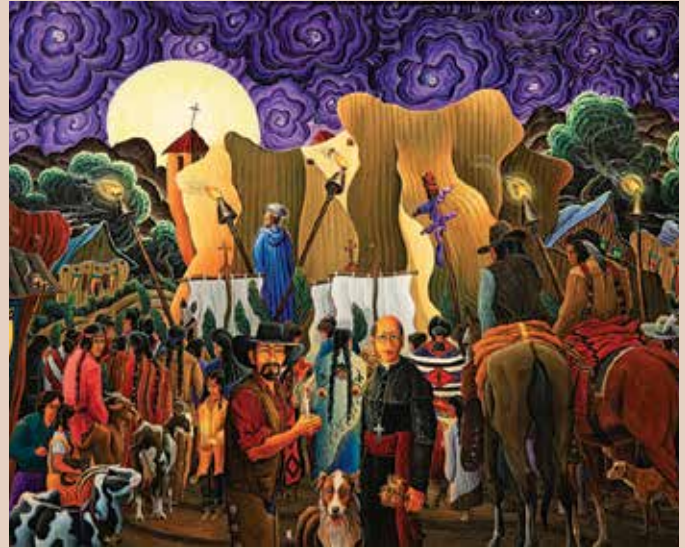
OPPOSITE: Detail from *Dangerous Trail* by W.R. Leigh

INDIANS

Kim Douglas Wiggins, American, born 1959
Eve of St. Francis, Ranchos de Taos, 2003
Oil on canvas, 60 x 76 inches

Another of the collecting goals of the Booth Western Art Museum is to collect not only the best of the living realist artists, but also those employing more contemporary styles over the same time period. This work by Kim Wiggins was created in a contemporary style, yet conveys many layers of history. It speaks to the multiculturalism evident in the Southwest, especially in Wiggins' native New Mexico (he was born in Roswell) in the areas around Santa Fe and Taos. Wiggins has inserted himself into the composition as the cowboy in the foreground on the left; to his right is the famed Taos Society of Artists founding member, painter Ernest Blumenschein (shown as the priest), who has ceremonially passed the candle of inspiration from his generation of artists to the next.

The scene filling the background is the Eve of Saint Francis feast when American Indians were urged to bring their animals to the Catholic mission such as the one seen in the painting, in Ranchos de Taos, perhaps the most painted church in America. Wiggins explains that this is one of the areas where the Native people quickly latched onto the teachings of the missionaries—who would not want to bring their animals to



be blessed, with prayers offered for their safety and productivity?

One of the leading painters in contemporary Western art, Wiggins is known for modern and fresh-looking expressionistic landscapes. Yet, as in this work, his contemporary vision has deep historical roots in the American West and works created a hundred years ago by artists such as Thomas Hart Benton, Maynard Dixon, and several artists associated with the Taos Society of Artists.