

Kim Wiggins

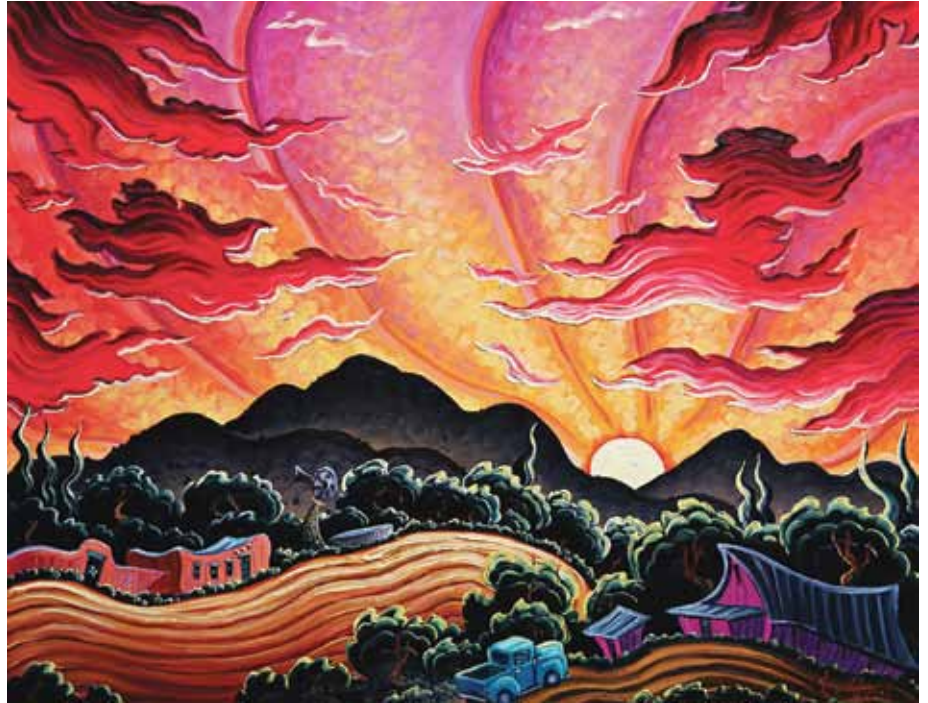
Manitou Galleries, August 2-31

THE NEW SOLO show from Kim Wiggins at Manitou Galleries' Palace Avenue location proclaims the artist's all-embracing intentions with a gently punning title, *How the West Was One*. Indeed, a spirit of regional unity reigns in the more than 20 paintings on display. Boldly colored images—ranging from serene New Mexico village life to a thunderous Comanche buffalo hunt to an epic cattle drive—demonstrate the artist's intention to portray his subject matter with “a surpassing beauty that eclipses the stresses and demands of modern reality.” Wiggins attends the show's opening reception on Friday, August 2, from 5 to 7:30 p.m., and signs copies of his recently published book, *Kim Wiggins: Artist of the Modern West*. He is also appearing at the gallery as a featured artist during Indian Market weekend, August 17-18.

Manitou associate director Cyndi Hall expects Wiggins' paintings to be snapped up quickly. “Most of Kim's works are sold before we even hang them on the wall,” she notes. The artist's canvases are in the collections of the Briscoe Western Art Museum in San Antonio, the American Museum of Western Art in Denver, the Booth Western Art Museum in Georgia, and the Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles.

Credit that success, first of all, to the New Mexico-born artist's innate and prodigious talent. Then there's the distinctive take on expressionism he's developed, characterized by impasto brushwork in sometimes swirling patterns that make his Southwestern scenes seem to pulse with dynamic, dreamlike energy. A writer might even be tempted to coin a new term for this style: magical regionalism. “I think that's probably close,” laughs Wiggins.

You can see that approach at play in his smaller pieces, which make up at least half of the show. The 16-by-20-



Sunset Near Madrid, oil, 16 x 20.





Beneath a Great Western Sky, oil, 30 x 40.



▲ **Big Medicine, oil, 48 x 72.**

◀ **A Golden Dawn, oil/gold leaf, 9 x 12.**

inch **SUNSET NEAR MADRID**, for example, conjures a magical evening in the small town of Madrid, south of Santa Fe, where wind-whipped skies and furrowed fields seem to dance in unison. A **GOLDEN DAWN**, measuring a modest 9 by 12 inches, adds extra undulations to the

familiar heavy buttresses of the landmark San Francisco de Asis church near Taos. Its sky is aglow with gold leaf—an “experiment,” says Wiggins, serving as evidence that “I’m constantly trying to stretch myself and grow as an artist.”

On a much larger scale are Wiggins’

major historical works, which he creates with the goal of “documenting the history of the American West.” **BENEATH A GREAT WESTERN SKY**, depicting the aforementioned cattle drive, pays tribute to the memory of the artist’s grandfather, Walter Chesser, who as a young teen cowboied for the San Simon Cattle Company in Cochise County, AZ. **BIG MEDICINE** captures a buffalo hunt on an almost cinematic 4-by-6-foot canvas. In both works, Wiggins says he is aiming—in his signature kinetic style—to do nothing short of compete with electronic media. “I’m trying to speak about the stories of the West to a new generation,” he says. “So these paintings offer something different, something new, to grab and hold their attention long enough for them to be interested in their culture and history.” —Norman Kolpas

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www.manitougalleries.com

See more work at www.southwestart.com/events/manitou-aug2019.