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UM Museum Acquires Major Western Art Collection

UM News Service

MISSOULA – The University of Montana recently was gifted a significant art collection that reveals how artists understood, imagined and redefined the West across the 20th century.

UM's Montana Museum of Art and Culture acquired the collection in 2021 from Stan and Donna Goodbar of Cheyenne, Wyoming. The donation of more than 125 works deepens the museum's holdings in Western art during the last century.

“The exhibition features artists who made a living primarily as illustrators, both shaping and reinforcing quintessential myths about the West's important archetypes, its settlers, cowboys and Indigenous inhabitants,” said Rafael Chacón, MMAC director and a professor of art history and criticism.

The works will be displayed in an exhibit titled “Imagining the West: Selections from the Stan and Donna Goodbar Collection of Western Art” from Feb. 4 to March 26 in the Meloy Gallery of UM's Performing Arts and Radio/Television Center. Exhibit programming will include:

- A free, socially distanced opening reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 4.
- A joint lecture with MMAC Curator Anna Strankman and artist Dagny Walton on the state of Western art in America at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 22, in the Masquer Theatre of UM's PAR/TV Center. The event will include a mini-concert with selections of American music by Professor Adam Collin's student cellists from 6 to 6:30 p.m.

The new collection highlights artists who followed Charles M. Russell and Frederick Remington's footsteps in the illustrative traditions of Western art and includes celebrated

Montana artists such as John Clarke, Jo De Yong, Elizabeth Lochrie, Ace Powell and O.C. Seltzer. The collection also contains the works of California artists Edward Borein, Will James and Olaf Wieghorst and modernists Frances Senska and Peter Voukos.

“These artists diffused notions of the West by way of popular prints, cartoons and graphic illustrations – especially for pulp fiction and magazines – and small-scale bronze sculptures,” Chacón said.

Stan Goodbar was born in Great Falls in 1929 and raised in Chester, Montana. He briefly attended college in Great Falls before serving in the U.S. Navy for four years. Returning from Korea in 1952, Goodbar married Donna Jeppesen, who attended UM and received her teaching certification from Eastern Montana College in Billings. Their marriage lasted close to 70 years, until Donna passed away early in 2021.

After completing his military service, Stan also attended UM, earning a business degree in 1956. The Goodbars lived in Chester, Missoula, Helena, Denver, Billings and finally Cheyenne. They were active in civic organizations in all three states.

The Goodbars began collecting Western art and artifacts while Stan worked as district manager for the telephone company in Billings. Gallery owner and philanthropist Dale Hawkins introduced them to all genres of Western art. While living in Helena, the Goodbars also befriended Bob Morgan, an artist and director/curator at the Montana Historical Society, who connected them to other artists. The Goodbars formed lifelong friendships with beloved artists like Nick Eggenhofer.

“Not long after Donna’s passing, Stan generously gifted their collection to the MMAC and UM,” Chacón said.

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Photo: Nick Eggenhoffer, “Cowboy Surrendering,” no date, dry brush, MMAC: Stan and Donna Goodbar Collection. (Photo by Eileen Rafferty)

This release is online at:

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