

Persimmon Hill

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Prix de West
Review

Reliving the
Western Heritage
Awards

TCAA Begins
Second Decade

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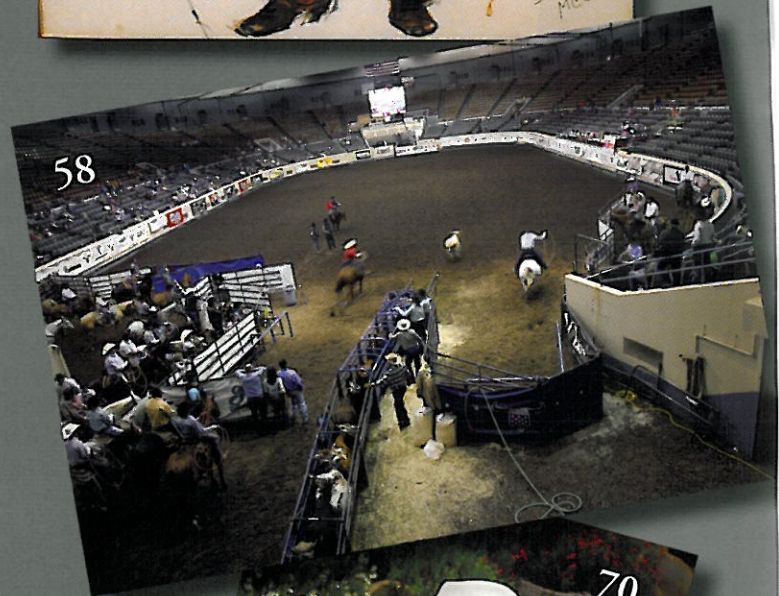
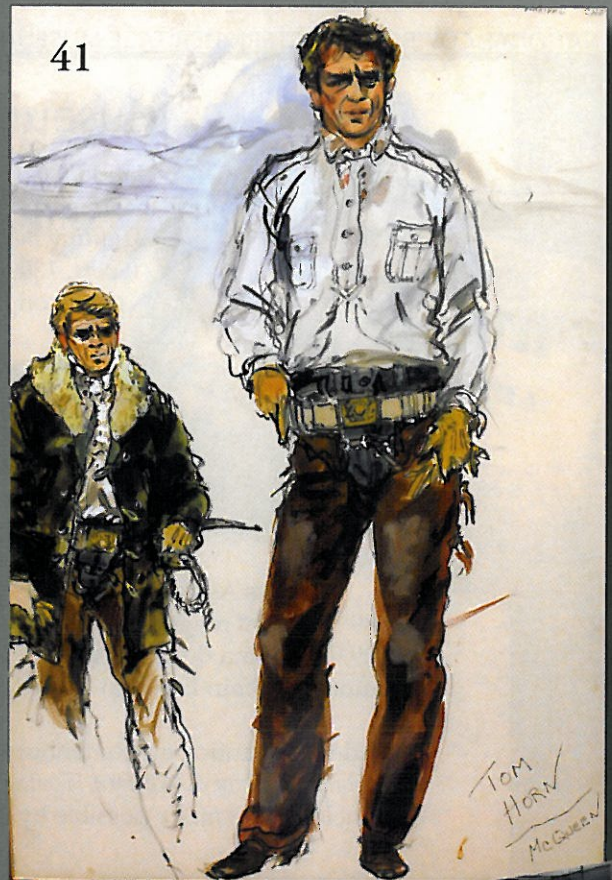
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*The Dawn Of
A New Day,*
Oil, 50" x 32"
by Tom
Browning, is
the Prix de West
Purchase Award
Winner for
the 2009 Prix
de West
Invitational
Art Exhibition
and Sale

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Mexican Equestrian Culture

Showcases Costumes,

Craftsmanship

By Judy Hilovsky

Ornate silverwork, elaborate embroidery and majestic saddles from the Mexican equestrian culture will be the focus of "Arte en la Charrería: The Artisanry of Mexican Equestrian Culture" exhibit at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum® from October 10 through January 3, 2010.

The *charro*, or Mexican cowboy, is an important aspect of North American history. Men and women in La Charrería hold events similar to those in American rodeo, but beyond the fancy riding is the pageantry of their costumes and accessories.

Many traditions date back to the 16th century when Spanish settlers brought their ranching practices to the colonies. The gathering of cattle and horses often ended with celebrations drawing people from miles around.

It was at these festivities that charros showed off their skills and competed with one another. The

horse events are called the *charreada* but the term *charrería* encompasses the entire culture of those events including costumes, music and food.

"Charrería encompasses numerous traditions associated with the colorful charro, a legendary figure that has become the national symbol of Mexico," said Don Reeves, the Museum's McCasland Chair of Cowboy Culture. "Through this exhibition the National Cowboy Museum joins in the celebration of the 2010 Bicentennial of Mexico's independence from Spain and the 100th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution," he said.

Highlighted in this exhibit is detailed craftsmanship, whether represented in a sombrero, clothing, saddle, bit and spurs or reatas. Suede riding pants and short jackets are decorated with metallic thread embroidery and silver buttons. Sombreros feature vivid colors and embellishments. Ropes are braided in complex patterns.

"The ornate treasures in this exhibition represent one of the most important charro collections in Mexico. Gumaro González of Nuevo Leon began collecting these items in the late 1800s, and we are thrilled his descendants are sharing these heirlooms with our visitors," Reeves said.

"Arte en la Charrería: The Artisanry of Mexican Equestrian Culture" and its tour are organized by International Arts & Artists, Washington, D.C. The National Cowboy Museum is the third stop on a schedule that includes seven North American destinations.

This bilingual exhibition should be a treat especially for those who may have grown up attending Mexican rodeos or charreadas. Experience the cultural traditions and the symbols of Mexico's national identity. Many of these spectacular items have never before been seen before and were borrowed specifically for this limited tour. 🐾

This program is funded in part by the Oklahoma Humanities Council (OHC) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in the exhibit do not necessarily represent those of OHC or NEH.

The China Poblana dress most distinctly identifies women of the Charrería culture. It is worn at social events but not in competition.

China Poblana Dress, c. 1940, courtesy of Luis González Cárdenas

