

COWGIRL UP!
ART FROM THE OTHER
HALF OF THE WEST

Desert Caballeros
Western Museum

21 N. Frontier Street, Wickenburg,
AZ 85390, www.westernmuseum.org

ENCHANTED LANDS

*Cowgirl Up! marks its
20th anniversary as one
of the leading art shows
for Western women artists.*



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For two decades, *Cowgirl Up! Art from the Other Half of the West* has made a name for itself as an event that props up women artists and places their talents at the forefront of Western art. Celebrating the artwork of more than 60 artists, opening weekend will take place March 28 to 30 at the Desert Caballeros

Western Museum in Wickenburg, Arizona. The opening weekend will feature a dynamic schedule of events including artist meet-and-greets, a quick-draw contest and live auctions.

Throughout this article are a few of the many exceptional artists whose work will be featured in the upcoming exhibition. Each of these artists captures the unique landscapes, people and

wildlife of the West.

An Arizonan through and through, **Naomi Brown** distills some of the most quintessential parts of the Grand Canyon State in her paintings—its unique flora, vibrant sunsets and captivating geology. “Evenings are my favorite part of each day here in Arizona,” she says. “I patiently wait for the sun to set, to see what colors and cloud patterns show up, usually rushing outside with my camera to capture this fleeting moment of the sun as it sinks behind the mountains...I love capturing these romantic colors in my work...Sometimes golds and reds and hot pinks and sometimes soft pinks and purples. I wanted to capture those peaceful and calming colors in this particular painting, with the warm colors in the sky and the cool greens of night-fall in the foreground.”

Another artist painting the beauty of the Southwestern sun is **Michelle Kondos**, whose oil *Sun Salute* depicts a cowgirl walking with her horse in the warm light of dusk. “Most days in the West give us a moment or two of pure magic. They typically happen around dawn or dusk as the sun softens its harsh glare and slips behind the mountains,” says Kondos. “That’s when the light seems to open doors to another plane of existence. Is this cowgirl aware of the magnificence of the moment she is living through or is she just too plumb tired after a long day of hard work to notice it? That’s something we can’t know, but for all of us who live in this enchanted land, we know its magic is always seeping into our souls whether or not we are aware of it.”

The vibrant animal art of **Sharon Markwardt** is teeming with personality and life. In one of her juried pieces,



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1. Naomi Brown, *Calm Evening*, oil on aluminum panel, 20 x 24½ in. 2. Michelle Kondos, *Sun Salute*, oil, 24 x 30 in.
3. Sharon Markwardt, *Lounging Longears*, oil on panel, 12 x 12 in.



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Lounging Longears, light illuminates the massive ears of a jackrabbit at rest. Markwardt finds inspiration in the natural world, where the dramas of wildlife and livestock play out. "Each creature lives a rich, colorful life and expresses emotions similar to our own. Bovines often exhibit a strong stoic nature. Chickens flutter with all the cacophony of teenage drama. Donkeys and goats are almost always good for a laugh," says the artist.

Dawn Sutherland is continuously inspired by the geology of the Southwest, from its canyons and plateaus, to its mountains and valleys. Commenting on her oil *Three Sisters of the Desert*, she says, "I am intrigued by the monoliths of the Colorado Plateau standing in testimony to durability in the face time and erosion whittling and wearing them away. One can occasionally find remnants of humankind's attempts to tame, fence and settle the landscape. Permanence and that which is transitory—juxtaposed." Her oil *Vigilant*

4. Sharon Markwardt, *Wake the CLUCK Up!*, oil on panel, 16 x 12 in. 5. Sharon Standridge, *Audience of One*, oil on linen, 11 x 14 in.

6. Dolores Purdy (Caddo), *The Aunties*, colored pencil on antique "Indian Territory" ledger paper, 16 x 13 in.



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captures a view of the magnificent Grand Canyon in Arizona.

Caddo Nation artist **Dolores Purdy** brings a colored pencil on ledger paper titled *The Aunties* to this year's event. "This is my second year at *Cowgirl Up!* and it has quickly become one of my favorite shows," she says. "One of the eight pieces I brought this year, *The Aunties*, is the first of an *Aunties* series I am planning. In the Native culture, 'Auntie' is a term of endearment and respect for older women who are mentors, peacekeepers and will be a strong

advocate if needed. These women may be biological aunts or a respected older woman within the community." Calling on her Caddo heritage, Purdy used bright colors to create a whimsical impression of her three subjects.

Living in the extreme northwestern corner of Colorado where ranch life was prevalent, sculptor **Margaret Drake** grew up with a fascination with horses, wildlife, Native Americans and the Western way of life. "I spent years grooming, riding and caring for my horses; consequently I am now well aware of the

anatomy of a horse," says Drake. "With my work, I want people to smile and feel good when they see it. I want them to appreciate the detail, accuracy and graceful motion of the subject that I'm representing." She still lives on a ranch in Glen Rose, Texas, with horses and a variety of other animals close by to serve as models.

Marcia Blakeman has always been drawn to the mountains, wide open spaces and all that lies within. She has lived in every continental United States timezone, but feels most at home in the



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West. There is something about being able to see vistas and distance that speaks to her. For Blakeman, painting is simply a pleasure. She does not paint to make a statement but rather to bring the beauty of everyday scenes to light. “We often overlook what we pass on a daily basis,” she says.

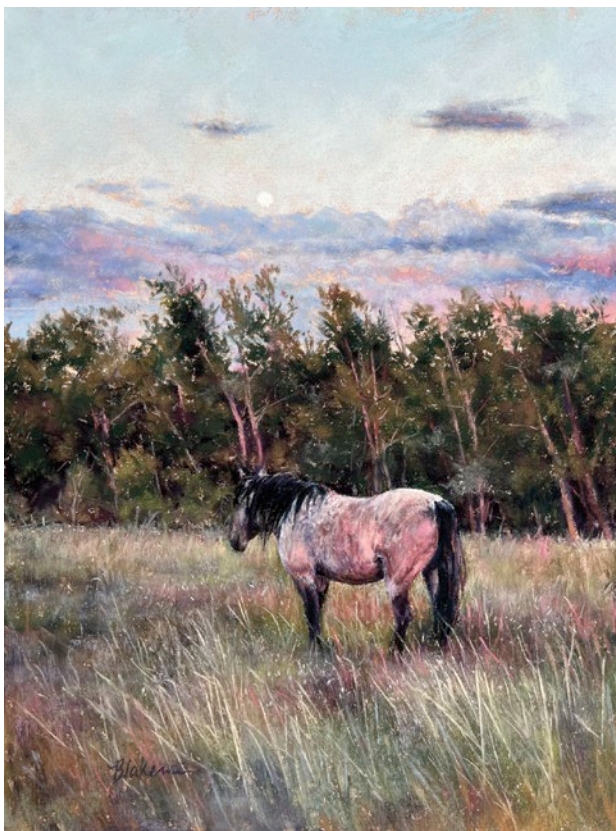
A floral portrait by **Lucy Dickens** features the yellow blooms of a staghorn cholla cactus. “Our plentiful sunlight and spring rains stimulate profuse blooms in various colors, including gorgeous yellow-green, orange and fuchsia. I am fortunate to have them all,” she says. “Vibrant yellow flowers can’t help but make one cheerful. We are reminded of the sun and all our sweet memories outdoors. They represent happiness, affection, gratitude and friendship. These stunning blooms are nature’s gift to each of us.”

Sharon Standridge also paints work that reveals her love of her subjects. “My artistic pursuits are concentrated on capturing the spirit of the American West with a particular emphasis on painting figures in motion as they perform everyday tasks typical of the era, or restful scenes of playing the fiddle,” she says. “The inclusion of wagons, horses and dogs serves to enrich the narrative and ambiance that I strive to portray in my paintings.” The cowboy models in her paintings are all acquaintances, family and friends.

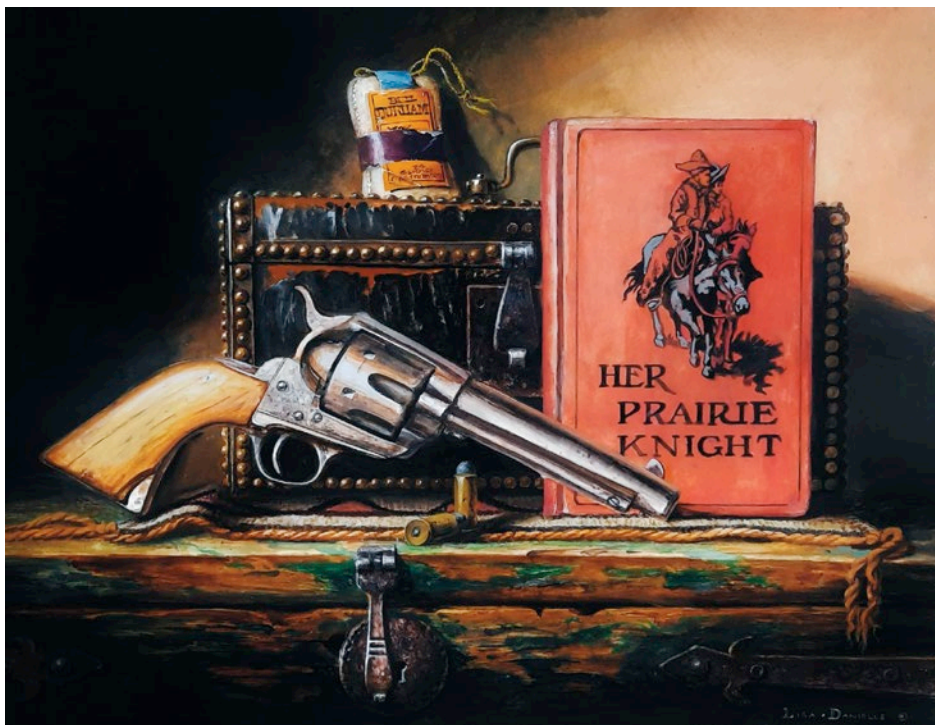
Susan Kliewer brings to the show a bronze of a tall, lanky cowgirl contemplating getting in the water. “When I first saw her I could hardly wait to start sculpting. I purposely elongated her to create a regal, confident feeling. With her boots and hat on the beach she may decide to try the water,” Kliewer says of the piece. “My husband and I would often ride down to Oak Creek for a swim. After tying up the horses



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13. Lisa Danielle, *When Knights Carried Colts*, acrylic, 14 x 18 in. 14. Lisa Danielle, *Southwest Textures*, 36 x 36 in.

15. Mary Leslie, *Toll Booth*, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in.



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we would walk through the sand to the water. I remember how good the warm sand felt on my bare feet. So many of my sculptures come from life experiences. I believe if your art comes from the heart your sculptures will be true and relatable."

Artist **Lisa Danielle** is very much drawn to "masculine subjects." Native regalia, from war shirts to weaponry, as well as cowboy gear, from saddles to six-shooters, can be found in her artwork. Her piece *When Knights Carried Colts*

features a revolver on a rustic wooden chest. "I love celebrating their survival through paint," says Danielle.

Animals have fascinated **Mary Leslie** for as long as she can remember, and this lifelong obsession shapes her work. "I naturally anthropomorphize, imagining the hidden personalities and humor within the animal kingdom. I love exploring their relationships within their own species and in unexpected connections with others," she says. Lately, the artist

has become equally captivated by the flora of the desert. "The stark beauty and resilience of these plants inspire me just as much as the creatures that navigate their world. Combining these elements in my work has been incredibly fulfilling, allowing me to highlight the humor, quirks and delicate balance of life in even the harshest environments."

Cowgirl Up! Art from the Other Half of the West will remain on view through May 25 in Wickenburg. 🐾