

from the editor

# Living Legends

Saluting a generation  
of leaders in the world  
of western art

WELCOME TO a very special edition of *Southwest Art* magazine: our first annual Legends of Fine Art issue. In our pages this month, we are pleased to pay tribute to 20 painters and sculptors who have achieved legendary status in the western art world. Together they have helped to define what it means to be successful in the art business in the West and beyond, and their achievements are truly remarkable.

How did we come to honor these particular men and women? Only through a long and difficult process of research, consultation, debate, and careful thought, to be sure. To begin with, we asked ourselves, What makes an artist a legend? We considered various markers of success: awards and honors received, inclusion in museum collections and exhibitions, membership in prestigious art organizations, prices commanded, contributions to the western art movement, books published, students taught and inspired, and longevity of career. Each artist secured their place on the list for a unique combination of these reasons, and thus the list aims to be not a compendium of “best” artists but rather a cross-section of influential and respected luminaries. Ultimately we arrived at a group of artists that have defined a generation; all of the Legends were born between 1919 and 1937. In future years we look forward to honoring the generations that have followed in their footsteps.

There is one artist missing from our list that we would very much like to have included. Well-known New Mexico painter Wilson Hurley passed away on August 29 at the age of 84 after battling Lou Gehrig’s disease. Hurley was truly a giant of a man, admired

by legions of collectors and artists alike. He was widely respected for his grand panoramic landscapes of scenes in New Mexico and other parts of the West. Many collectors know Hurley’s work primarily because of the five enormous triptychs he created in 1994 for the ballroom at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, site of the annual Prix de West Invitational Art Exhibition & Sale. Each triptych portrays a distinct western vista, and each measures 45 feet wide and 18 feet tall, bringing immeasurable grandeur to the ballroom.

Hurley also created four large landscapes for the rotunda of the Oklahoma State Capitol and has works on public view at the Albuquerque Museum and the Albuquerque airport. To say that he will be greatly missed is an understatement; his legacy, of course, lives on in the beauty he created on canvas.



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MIKE BUCHER



“If you go to the  
canvas with love  
and joy in your  
heart, somehow  
it comes off on  
the canvas.”

—Wilson Hurley, 1994

