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Booth Western Art Museum Exhibition Showcases New Perspectives on America's National Parks

CARTERSVILLE, GA – When the task of visiting even a handful of America's National Parks in one lifetime seems daunting, the next best alternative might be to experience them vicariously through the first-hand accounts of the outdoor painters who capture their hidden wonders. In recognition of the plein air (outdoor) painters who have captured America's scenic landscapes for centuries, the museum is presenting *American Legacy: Our National Parks, On Location with the Plein Air Painters of America*. Opening March 8 in the Special Exhibition Gallery, the exhibition features approximately 100 pieces of art by 35 members and guests of the Plein Air Painters of America. It will remain on view through August 26.

“While today's plein-air artists continue the legacy of 19th Century painters whose field work helped inspire the National Parks concept, the diverse range of their subject matter reflects the complex issues motivating wilderness preservation in the 21st Century.” said Booth Museum Director of Curatorial Services, Jeff Donaldson. “Painting in plein air, meaning outdoors, allows artists to capture the true essence of nature, including the colors and light which make it so beautiful. *American Legacy: Our National Parks* is an exhibition depicting the visual and emotional documentation of the more than 130 parks that have been preserved because of the work done by plein air painters.”

“We are excited about this exhibition because of the wide range of National Parks represented, from Maine to Alaska,” said Museum Executive Director Seth Hopkins. “Visitors will find familiar scenes of Western National Parks like Yellowstone, Yosemite and Teton. However, parks closer to home, like Cumberland Island, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Appalachian Trail are also well represented.”

Organized in 1986 as a by-invitation painting group, the Plein Air Painters of America are a small group of painters dedicated to painting on location and exploring the vast beauty of our land, and are responsible for putting plein air painting on the national stage. However, plein air painting dates back to the early 1800s when artists first began experimenting with carrying small amounts of prepared paint into the field. The first group to truly break the French academic tradition of painting carefully composed historical settings was the Barbizon School in the 1830s. Today, plein air painters are still relying on their senses to capture the light and spirit of the natural settings before them on paper or canvas.

For this exhibition, organized by The Haggin Museum, each artist selected a favorite park to document and thus headed to all corners of the United States to paint one of the many National Parks from coast to coast. *American Legacy: Our National Parks* is not only a visual reminder of the vast beauty this country holds, but also documentation of what these artists have helped provide over the years – hundreds of National Parks.

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The public is invited to the opening of *American Legacy: Our National Parks*, coinciding with the first evening of the 9th Annual Southeastern Cowboy Gathering, Thursday, March 8. An opening reception begins at 5:00 p.m. followed by a lecture at 7:00 pm, by Gathering Featured Artist Tom Gilleon. Opening events are free for members or included with admission for not-yet members.

For more information on *American Legacy: Our National Parks, On Location with the Plein Air Painters of America*, please call 770-387-1300 or visit www.boothmuseum.org.

About Booth Western Art Museum:

Booth Western Art Museum, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is a 120,000 square foot museum located in Cartersville, Georgia. Guests are invited to explore the American West through contemporary Western artwork. The Museum also houses a Presidential Gallery, Civil War art gallery, more than 200 Native American artifacts, and Sagebrush Ranch children's gallery. Visitors to Booth Museum also enjoy the intimate downtown setting with unique specialty and antique shops, boutiques and nationally featured restaurants all within walking distance of the Museum. Open since August 2003, Booth Museum is the second largest art museum in the state of Georgia, and houses the largest permanent exhibition space for Western art in the country. To learn more about the Booth Western Art Museum, visit www.boothmuseum.org.

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