

Object of the Month, March 2011
The Stampede by Harry Jackson
Suzanne Zander

Identification:

Name: The Stampede

Artist: Harry Jackson, American

Date: 1958–59

Classification: Bronze Sculpture, Base: Wyoming Jade

Accession #: 91.150 a,b

Social/Historical Context:

The lore and lure of the Great American West continues to be part of American psyche. Many long-running cowboy t.v. shows and Hollywood movies show a version of cowboy life especially in the '50s and '60s when Jackson did this work. The "Marlboro Man" became an important advertising icon. Cowboy life or some variation of that still sparks the imagination and are the subject of popular movies.

Artist's Biography:

Harry Jackson was born in Chicago and grew up near the stockyards. As a young boy he heard stories from the men who drove the cattle to their final destination. At age 14 he ran away from home and worked on various ranches. At age 18 he enlisted in the Marines and fought in WWII. At the end of his service, he moved to NYC and became friends with Jackson Pollack. He became part of the Abstract Expressionist group that included Pollack, De Kooning and Frankenthaler. Jackson had several critically acclaimed shows, but returned to figurative art of the American West in general and cowboy life in particular, much to the derision of his former colleagues. He painted numerous murals and large paintings on this theme. He began using clay models to study composition for his paintings. His sculptures became an outgrowth of his studies. He did numerous sculptures of John Wayne, who had a collection of Jackson's sculptures. He did a sculpture of Wayne as "Rooster Cogburn" that appeared on the cover of "Time" magazine. Jackson now lives part time in Camore, Italy.

where he has a studio, and part time in a cabin in Wyoming.

Object: The Stampede show long horn cattle being driven by three cowboys on horseback. One of the cowboys has fallen and is being drug by his horse. The cowboy does not survive the fall, and in fact Jackson made a companion piece to "The Stampede" called "Range Burial". "Range Burial" shows a group of cowboys laying the fallen one in a shallow grave. Jackson also depicted these two scenes in oil paintings. The MIA bronze sculpture is mounted on a pedestal of Wyoming bronze.

Tour possibilities:

This is a wonderful piece for a VTS tour although it is at a perfect height to attract touching. Boys especially seem to respond to the "noise" and action.

Possible open-ended questions:

(The ever popular) What's happening in this sculpture?

What do you see that makes you say that?

How does this sculpture sound?

Other discoveries: The MIA library holds several books that have a good overview of Jackson's work, both paintings and sculptures. The library call numbers are: NB237.J32A43 1981 and NB237.J32 A41 1981 and "The Connoisseur" , Sept. 1979, pp.28-37

I hope you will use this dynamic piece on a tour. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks in advance for all your research work. Suzanne