

Bill Anton

Legacy Gallery, March 7-17



No Place Like Home, oil, 40 x 60.

WHEN BILL ANTON last had a one-man show, he was juggling the demands of his rising status as a western fine artist and his role as the father of two young children. During that precious if frenetic time, says Anton, “I didn’t want to get involved again in something that had the ability to take over my life, which a solo show can do, while my kids were here. And I had just begun to get into national shows. That was keeping me busy along with the gallery representation I’d gained, so I had more than enough to do.”

Of course, that was 18 years ago. In addition to prestigious gallery representation, the Prescott, AZ, artist has steadily accrued a number of distinguished awards since then, including the Robert Lougheed Memorial Award at the Prix de West Invitational in 2009 and the Spirit of the West Award at the Masters of the American West show in 2015. Now, with his children off at college, Anton has been busy gearing up for his first one-man show since 2001. The results of his efforts—around 20 oil paintings in total—are on view

this March at Legacy Gallery in Scottsdale, AZ. Alongside some of his major pieces, the artist includes his preliminary full-color oil studies. The show opens on Thursday, March 7, with an artist’s reception and sale on Saturday, March 9, at 7 p.m.

In *Under the Spell of the West*, as his exhibition is titled, Anton continues to explore the western landscapes and ways of life that compelled him to switch gears and pursue painting nearly 40 years ago, after earning his degree in English from Northern Arizona Univer-



Finders Keepers, oil, 40 x 40.



Incoming Tide, oil, 40 x 48.

sity. “The landscape is always a strong part of my work,” says the artist, who received instrumental guidance early in his artistic journey from western painters James Reynolds (1926-2010) and Ned Jacob. “It’s sort of the foil that sets the mood for everything else in a scene,” he adds. “Part of the charm of the western art genre is the fact that it combines the three great painting disciplines—the figure, equine, and landscape—in one.”

Delightfully, that charm spills over into Anton’s show, where viewers are greeted with nocturnes and twilight scenes set amid the rugged bluffs and canyons of the Southwest. There are modern cowboys sporting blue jeans, bright bandannas, Stetsons, and leather chaps, tackling a day’s work with their horses. There are mountain scenes, too, and rolling ranchlands carpeted in the lush tapestry of spring. There is even a coastal equine scene; set amid the sea cliffs of California, it’s one of the few seascapes the artist has painted to date.

All of these paintings echo, in a real sense, places and experiences that Anton has observed firsthand—not just as an artist dashing off plein-air studies, but as a rider lending a hand to cattle drives on ranches throughout the West. Exercising his own horses on the forest-rimmed land where he resides has provided inspiration, too, says Anton. “There is a romance about the West, borne of its history and geographical beauty, that has kept me focused and observant but also attracted to the [western art] genre, almost like being in a trance,” he notes. “It got ahold of me as a kid and has sustained me through 35-plus years of painting essentially one subject.” —*Kim Agricola*

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