

# BRANDED BEASTS

By John O'Hern

**B**randing of animals as property can be traced back to ancient Egypt. The Romans branded animals with signs that carried protective spells. Today branding continues from the use of hot branding, which burns the identifying mark into the animal's flesh, to freeze branding, which kills the color-making capacity of hair which grows back white.

**Martin Wittfooth's** startling *Branded*, 2017, revolves "around a pretty simple concept," he says, "that of the human habit of symbolic branding as it relates to ideas of ownership and dominion, and the commodification of nature. The brands I've chosen to depict are a medley of symbols used by horse breeders."

Wittfooth has chosen primarily elaborate central-European brands. Even wild mustangs gathered on Bureau of Land Management lands in the United States have unique brands that indicate where they were captured, their age, their registration number, and the fact that they are the property of the U.S. government. The marks are freeze brands.

Native American horses were often painted with a variety of symbols and adorned with elaborately beaded regalia. A 1908 photograph by **Edward S. Curtis** (1868-1952), *Village criers on horseback, Bird On the Ground and Forked Iron, Crow Indians, Montana*, shows a beautiful beaded martingale

or horse collar.

In *Scouts of the Highground*, **Richard D. Thomas** shows a horse and rider painted for battle. Every painted mark on a warrior's face and body had significance and the designs were often repeated on their teepees to call attention to their accomplishments. The circle around the horse's eye was often painted around its nostrils to sharpen its vision and sense of smell. Thomas began painting when he was 30 and has since immersed himself in

in Texas began to focus his attention to art as a career. Cowboy Artists of America painter, **James Boren** (1921-1990), had moved to the area and had a flat tire. Grelle was sent to fix it and struck up a long friendship. Grelle was named to the CAA in 1995.

**Chloé Marie Gaillard** grew up around horses during her childhood in France. Her fascination with other cultures shows in her inclusion of their motifs in her graphic acrylic paintings on brown paper. *La boussole aux*

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*"I don't paint horses the way they look, I paint their essence. I assimilate all that is the horse and let it out through my art."* —Terry Meyer, artist

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the life of the West, moving from his native California to Colorado and then to Montana.

**Martin Grelle** often paints the elaborate trappings of Native riders and horses as well as the painted symbols used for war. In *Guardian*, the inverted "U" usually symbolized the number of horses captured in battle. Grelle has drawn for most of his life. A chance meeting when he was working at his father's gas station

*chevaux (The compass of horses)* depicts four galloping horses in essentially primary colors representing the four directions—in French: *nord, est, sud* and *ouest*—and branded with the abbreviation of each. Native American medicine wheels depict corresponding colors—white, yellow, red and black for the cardinal points—each with its own importance. Sometimes there is a green central circle representing beauty and harmony.

**Kenneth Riley's** (1919-2015) powerful double profiles of Native warriors and their mounts capture the bond between horse and rider. In his painting *As One*, the horse wears an elaborate mask which, itself, has a painted circle around the eye hole. Riley's strong sense of graphic design came from his work as an illustrator. He studied with Thomas Hart Benton at the Kansas City Art Institute and with the respected artist and teacher Harvey Dunn. Dunn encouraged Riley to be bold in his painting, a trait that served him well.

In the pages of this special section, readers

**Richard D. Thomas**, *Scouts of the Highground*, oil, 20 x 30". Courtesy Trailside Galleries, Scottsdale, Arizona, and Jackson, Wyoming.





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**1. Martin Grelle, *The Guardian***, oil on canvas, 24 x 32". Courtesy Scottsdale Art Auction, Scottsdale, Arizona. **2. Kenneth Riley (1919-2015), *As One***, acrylic, 5 x 6". Courtesy Jackson Hole Art Auction, Jackson, Wyoming. **3. Martin Wittfooth, *Branded***, oil on canvas, 36 x 60". Courtesy the artist.

will find equine subjects from some of the leading artists and galleries, including **Desert Caballeros Western Museum, Jane Skaar Coleman, Karen Boylan, Kennedy Desert Art, Linnea Pergola, Lisa Johnson-McLoughlin, Manitou Galleries, Marla Smith and Terry Meyer.**

On view at **Desert Caballeros Western Museum** is the work of Gladys Roldan-de-Moras, who received the award for Director's Choice: Best New Artist and the Museum

Purchase Award at the 2016 *Cowgirl Up! Art from the Other Half of the West* exhibition and sale. Her piece *At the Charreada* is now part of the museum's permanent collection. "This is a young team of *escaramuzas* getting ready to start their routine in a *charreada*. The young competitors have amazing talents that are much fun to take in. Their excitement before the contest is contagious," Roldan-de-Moras says of her painting.

**Jane Skaar Coleman** has owned, shown and

ridden horses for many years, and over that time they have become one of her favorite subjects. "This group was lounging near the main corral on a Wyoming ranch I was commissioned to paint," Coleman says of her painting *Taking the Day Off*. Watercolor and oil are her chosen media and for her Western subjects, it's flora, fauna, wildlife, animals and landscapes.

"My admiration for the beauty, strength, and integrity of the horse draws me to capture the essence of these stunning animals in my

COLLECTOR'S FOCUS  
**ART OF THE HORSE**



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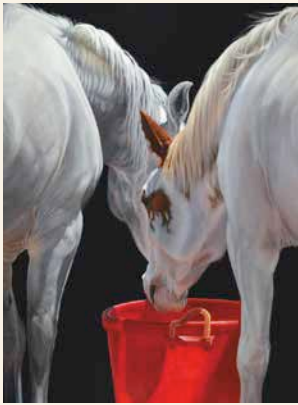
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4. **Chloe Gaillard**, *La Boussole aux Chevaux*, colored pencil on brown paper, 13 x 14 1/4" 5. **Desert Caballeros Western Museum**, *At the Charreada*, oil on Belgian linen, 29 x 39", by Gladys Roldan-de-Moras 6. **Manitou Galleries**, *Six Quarters*, oil on canvas, 36 x 96", by Gail Gash Taylor 7. **Lisa Johnson-McLoughlin**, *Mellow Yellow*, oil on board, 16 x 24" 8. **Manitou Galleries**, *Rainbow*, oil on canvas, 52 x 72", by Ethelinda 9. **Manitou Galleries**, *Red Bucket*, oil on panel, 48 x 36", by Gail Gash Taylor 10. **Terry Meyer**, *Brigade*, oil on canvas, 48 x 60" 11. **Linnea Pergola**, *Scottsdale*, AZ, watercolor, 34 x 16" 12. **Terry Meyer**, *Turquoise Sky*, oil on canvas, 48 x 30" 13. **Marla Smith**, *Loyal Partner*, oil, 16 x 12" 14. **Karen Boylan**, *Cute as a Button*, oil, 10 x 8"

paintings," says **Karen Boylan**, whose art will be showing at the upcoming *National Fine Art Show & Auction* in Ellensburg, Washington. "My passion is to capture and preserve the magnificence these animals portray. Horses have been a part of my heart and soul all of my life and collectors appreciate the insight and intimate knowledge I convey in my art."

Aiming to provide a glimpse into the quiet, inner world of the horse, **Sarah Kennedy** paints what she lives. "Through my lifetime relationships with horses I have experienced their honesty which has shaped me as an artist and a horse owner," Kennedy says. Two of her equine pieces were recently purchased by HBO for the set of *True Detective* starring Woody

Harrelson and Matthew McConaughey.

Scottsdale-based artist **Linnea Pergola** worked on a ranch where horses swam for therapy and exercise, and the experience provided inspiration for many of her artworks, including *Water Ballet*. "I love whimsy, color and humor and it gives me satisfaction to see a smile on a viewer's face when they see my art," Pergola says.

After working with and owning horses for 51 years, **Lisa Johnson-McLoughlin** knows her subject matter. "I want my work to embody the 'past and present' of the 'West,' as it is known, and show how the Old West influences our lives in the West today," Johnson-McLoughlin says. "I am very aware of how horses move, how

they are put together, how their footwork and legs are influenced by their balance, and how the working clothes of the horse's tack, saddle, bridle and bit should work, look and fit."

**Manitou Galleries**, based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, features artwork from **Gail Gash Taylor** and **Ethelinda**. "Gail Gash Taylor lovingly and meticulously paints horses in a photorealistic style that is shockingly believable, yet painterly. Taylor expertly captures her equine subject's anatomy and spirit in a way that only someone who has spent time with horses can," says Matt Mullins, marketing director at Manitou. "Ethelinda's bold and painterly depictions of horses express her subject matter's strength and power. Her

COLLECTOR'S FOCUS  
**ART OF THE HORSE**



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**15. Jane Skaar Coleman, *Lollygagging***, watercolor, 19 x 27" **16. Sarah Kennedy, *Alabaster***, oil on linen, 20 x 16" **17. Linnea Pergola, *Water Ballet***, silk painting, 42 x 30"

thick, sometimes impasto, brushstrokes sculpt the rippling muscles of the horses as they gallop through her canvases."

**Marla Smith** says, "Some of my best days are spent painting horses. It brings me in contact with their grace, beauty, and gentle wisdom." Having been raised in the American Southwest, much of

her formative years were spent hiking, exploring and riding horses.

Wisconsin-based artist **Terry Meyer** says, "I am inspired by the mythology, power, and energy horses embody. Their spirit of freedom and strength of motion. My artwork is a conduit to that spirit." 🐾

FEATURED  
**ARTISTS & GALLERIES**

**Desert Caballeros  
 Western Museum**

21 N. Frontier Street  
 Wickenburg, AZ 85390  
 (928) 684-2272  
[info@westernmuseum.org](mailto:info@westernmuseum.org)  
[www.westernmuseum.org](http://www.westernmuseum.org)

**Jane Skaar Coleman**

(928) 668-1061  
 (307) 851-6216  
[janecoleman@wyoming.com](mailto:janecoleman@wyoming.com)  
[www.janecolemanart.com](http://www.janecolemanart.com)

**Karen Boylan**

(406) 586-1564  
[kboylanart@gmail.com](mailto:kboylanart@gmail.com)  
[www.kboylanart.com](http://www.kboylanart.com)

**Kennedy Desert Art**

Sarah Kennedy  
 (520) 579-5584  
[sarah@kennedydesertart.com](mailto:sarah@kennedydesertart.com)  
[www.kennedydesertart.com](http://www.kennedydesertart.com)

**Linnea Pergola**

(602) 432-2706  
[linneapergola@gmail.com](mailto:linneapergola@gmail.com)  
[www.linneapergola.net](http://www.linneapergola.net)

**Lisa Johnson-  
 McLoughlin**

P.O. Box 599  
 Pearce, AZ 85625

**Manitou Galleries**

123 W. Palace Avenue  
 Santa Fe, NM 87501  
 (505) 986-0440  
[www.manitougalleries.com](http://www.manitougalleries.com)

**Marla Smith**

(928) 899-1113  
[happytrails@commspeed.net](mailto:happytrails@commspeed.net)  
[www.marlasmith.com](http://www.marlasmith.com)

**Terry Meyer**

(715) 514-9964  
[tmeyer6@gmail.com](mailto:tmeyer6@gmail.com)  
[www.terrymeyerfineart.com](http://www.terrymeyerfineart.com)



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*Jane Skaar Coleman*



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928-668-1061  
cell: 307-851-6216

janecoleman@wyoming.com  
**www.janecolemanart.com**

**LISA JOHNSON-McLOUGHLIN**  
WESTERN ARTIST

www.lisajohnsonmcloughlin.com

P.O. Box 599 - PEARCE, AZ 85625 - ljmccloughlinart@gmail.com - 520.507.0213



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"Tres Amigos" Oil 12 x 16"

**MARLA SMITH**  
marlasmith.com

928-899-1113  
happytrails@commspeed.net