

Briscoe Western Art Museum

The American West was a diverse place. In a land of new opportunity, people and communities of different cultures came together and settled this great American landscape. This month we celebrate and learn about the black cowboys that helped define our memory of the American West.



Once Upon a Time, 2020. Mark Maggiori (b. 1977). Oil on canvas.

"I decided to make a major piece to help rectify history and show the next generation that cowboys were not just white like Hollywood and the history books pretended... I chose this title as a way of retelling the story. Once upon a time, there were also black cowboys."

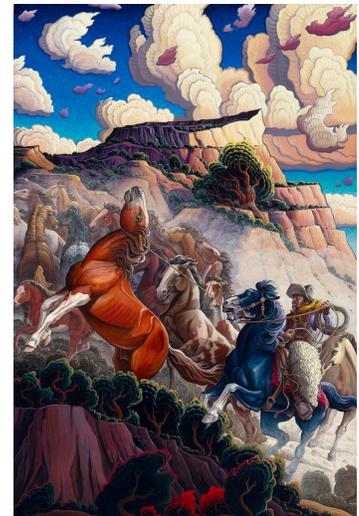
- Mark Maggiori, 2020

As models, Maggiori used two working cowboys who hail from El Paso, Texas.

Frank Chisum-Wild West Icon, 2020. Kim Wiggins (b. 1959). Oil on canvas.

Born a slave, Frank Chisum was purchased by John Chisum who granted him his freedom in 1860. Frank took the Chisum last name as his own, and worked with John Chisum for the remainder of his life. Frank Chisum worked as a cowhand and bodyguard and also worked many cattle drives like the one depicted in this painting.

Wiggins' dynamic diagonal composition adds to the heroic and daring portrayal of Chisum's life and work.



The Mail Must Go Through, 2021. Ezra Tucker (b. 1955). Acrylic on board.

Before the U.S. Postal Service was formalized by the federal government, Americans living in the West had to rely on the brave men and women of the Pony Express. These riders delivered mail by horseback and stagecoach through hazardous terrain and dangerous conditions. William Robinson was one of three documented African Americans who worked for the Pony Express. He rode the 140-mile route from Stockton, California to the mines in Mariposa County.

My Wild West Self

We hope that you can see yourself in the museum as you walk around the galleries and explore the artwork on display. Here is an activity to help think about yourself as if you were in the Wild West.

Pick one of the paintings on the previous page. How would you describe the people in that painting?

What positive words would you use to describe yourself?

In the space below, draw or write about who you would be in the Wild West. What kind of job would you have? What would that look like?