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Ken Freeman, Scottsdale's Adopted Son, Receives Cowboy Spirit Award

Artist Kenneth M. Freeman receives the Cowboy Spirit Award along with actor James Drury (The Virginian)

Scottsdale, AZ – Kenneth M. Freeman, a nationally recognized artist, receives the Cowboy Spirit Award along with actor James Drury (The Virginian) during the Festival of the West on Saturday, March 20, 2010. For artist Kenneth M. Freeman, the cowboy hat and boots was not a gimmick or shtick. Neither was his Arizona attitude. Ken Freeman may have grown up in a traditional Jewish home in Chicago, Illinois but make no mistake ... he was a cowboy.

Keywords: art, festival of the west, museum, western art, cowboy, rodeo, fine art, Booth Museum, Smithsonian, Artist at Work, museum book, Scottsdale, Chicago, American Academy of Art

Artist Kenneth M. Freeman would be proud to receive the Cowboy Spirit Award at the final Festival of the West. Freeman, who passed away May 2008 painted portraits of three other Cowboy Spirit Award recipients: John Smith and Robert Fuller (both know for Laramie) and John Wayne, is honored posthumously on Saturday, March 20. At 2 p.m. at the festival. The artwork he created specifically for the Festival of the West is now part of Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy – 'Artist at Work' museum book for the exhibition at the Booth Western Art Museum located in Cartersville, Georgia. The Booth Western Art Museum, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, houses the largest exhibit space for Western Art in the country.

Each year The National Festival of the West presents the prestigious award to men and women who have contributed to the continuance of the western life-style and who have demonstrated the characteristics so admired in the American cowboy. Freeman is the only fulltime artist ever chosen to receive the Cowboy Spirit Award.

Mary Brown, founder of Festival of the West, considered Kenneth M. Freeman a close friend.

"We met the second year after I began the festival and I connected with him almost instantly. Then when I saw his paintings and realized how good he was, I was truly grateful he wanted to be a part of the festival," Brown remembered. "He was a fellow cowboy at heart, and his enthusiasm for the life was overwhelming in a very positive way. Without a doubt, he was a real sweetheart."

Bonnie Adams, curator of the Legacy collection will accept the award for Freeman.

"Leaving his home in Chicago and moving to Scottsdale, Arizona was a turning point in Ken's career," Adams said recently. "The lure of the cowboy life captured his imagination as a young child. Once here he embraced the lifestyle of the West wholeheartedly and lived that dream – riding horseback, participating in cattle drives, becoming a Buffalo Soldier and attending Native American ceremonies. Ken would be so happy knowing he's being remembered as a cowboy as well as an artist."

Adams adds, "As he immersed himself in this rich cultural heritage, he documented the daily lives of the people, capturing faces and activities with his camera that would later be the models for his stunning paintings that embody the soul and spirit of the American West – cowboys and cowgirls, rodeo riders, Native American elders and children, grizzled mountain men and breathtaking Western landscapes. So completely did he identify with his new life, he even called himself a 'Jewish Cowboy'."

A Kiowa poet once remarked that the American West is a place that has to be seen to be believed, and it may have to be believed in order to be seen. Kenneth M. Freeman had the talent to draw, paint and sculpt the West as he had seen and experienced it. His unique combination of light and depth of color, together with rich cultural heritage, has left us with a body of work that connect with the soul and spirit of the American West.

About Kenneth M. Freeman

Works of Kenneth M. Freeman are in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Museum, Library of Congress, American Art Academy, and Booth Museum as well as distinguished private collections. Accolades include winning competitions at the San Diego Museum of Art, the Hubbard Museum of Art, the Illinois State Fair, the Salmagundi Show in New York City, the Union League Club of Chicago, being chosen five times as artist for the Parada Del Sol Rodeo in Scottsdale, AZ and having a painting selected for the 1988 Prescott Centennial Rodeo. He was an illustrator for authors like Louis L'Amour.

Ken was known affectionately as "Rembrandt of the Rodeo" by members of the press. First Lady Barbara Bush, impressed with Ken Freeman's southwestern art, invited him to show at the Smithsonian Institute in conjunction with the Native American Museum Extravaganza. Ken also had a one man show in 2007 in Milan, Italy at Fondazione Metropolitan. www.KennethMFreeman.com

Recent Kenneth M. Freeman Awards of Excellence:

- Lifetime Achievement Award from Western Artists of America
- Western Heritage Award from Parada del Sol
- Cowboy Spirit Award from the National Festival of the West
- Special Award from the World's Oldest Rodeo – Prescott, AZ

Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy Museum Exhibition Schedule:

These two collections are traveling retrospectives of the late Kenneth M. Freeman (1935 - 2008) who had a prolific career as both an illustrator and fine artist, primarily portraying the American West. Artist at Work and Portraits of the West presents a cross-section of Freeman's lifetime body of work and range of mediums.

- Artist at Work: The Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy

Museum exhibition of 50 works by Kenneth M. Freeman
The Booth Western Art Museum, Cartersville, GA
January 2010 - May 2010

The Booth Museum is a Smithsonian affiliate museum

- Portraits of the West - The Kenneth M. Freeman Legacy

Premiere exhibition of 65 works by Kenneth M. Freeman

The Phippen Museum, Prescott, AZ

June 26 - October 24, 2010 - www.PhippenArtMuseum.org

About The Festival of the West

Celebrating the history of the American West, the Festival of the West is in its 20th year. The four-day festival is an extravaganza of music, Western film and TV stars and chuck wagon grub. There is a shopper's expo selling all things Western, from jewelry to saddles to furniture. Family friendly events including the Buffalo Soldier encampment, log home showcase, and Mountain Men Rendezvous take place each day. Michael Martin Murphy is concert, Saturday, March 20. It is never too late to be a cowboy! For full schedule and prices visit www.FestivaloftheWest.com

MEDIA RESOURCES:

HD Digital B-Roll footage is available of the Artist at Work exhibition at the Booth Museum. You can preview the video footage at <http://www.KennethMFreeman.com/press.htm>

HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES:

1. Booth Museum Installation of Artist at Work (TIF 5.5MB)
<http://www.KennethMFreeman.com/press/boothinstallation.tif>
2. Impending Decision – Freeman's most famous painting (JPG 3.8 MB)
<http://www.KennethMFreeman.com/press/ImpendingDecision.jpg>
3. Tough Draw – the official image of the exhibition (JPG 2.7 MB)
<http://www.KennethMFreeman.com/press/ToughDraw.jpg>

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Documents and/or Photos available for this release:

John Wayne by legendary artist Kenneth M. Freeman for the Festival of the West

To view supporting documents and/or photos, go to www.enr-corp.com/pressroom and enter Release ID: 246419