

# Art Knowledge News

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Kota Ezawa - *Cowboy*, 2006, lightbox - Collection of Gregory & Anne Avis - Image courtesy of Haines Gallery, SF

**RENO, NV - The Nevada Museum of Art opened to the public the feature exhibition *Between Grass and Sky: Rhythms of Cowboy Poem* , Saturday, January, 17.** The exhibition is one part of a jointly developed exhibition between the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno and the Western Folklife Center in Elko, Nevada. The complementary exhibition, *Between Grass and Sky: Trappings of a Ranch Life* will be on exhibit at the **Western Folklife Center from January 20 through August 29.**

Working together, and in celebration of the 25th National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, the two organizations created joint exhibitions that evoke a range of experiences central to life in the American West. Both exhibitions are designed by Nik Hafermaas of UeBERSEE Design in Los Angeles and are intended to present opposite, yet balanced perspectives as part of the overarching exhibition. *Between Grass and Sky* and all supporting programs are generously sponsored by the E.L. Wiegand Foundation.

This exhibition of contemporary artwork by artists such as Karen Kitchell, Adam Jahiel and Theodore Waddell, offers fresh insight into the varied experiences arising from life in rural and ranching communities. Inspired by the widely-celebrated poem *Grass*—written by legendary Texas poet Buck Ramsey—*Rhythms of a Cowboy Poem* features a selection of contemporary artworks combined with the spoken voices of renowned cowboy poets.

“Much like visual art, the enduring tradition of cowboy poetry is a rich and vital form of cultural expression in the American West,” said **Ann M. Wolfe, Curator of Exhibitions and Collections, Nevada Museum of Art**. “The poem Grass was selected as the basis for the exhibition because it eloquently engages a range of themes and ideas that resonate with anyone who has spent time in the open spaces of the American West.”

Foremost among these themes is the recognition of rhythm as an essential component of nature and cowboy life as well as art—a quality that is also reflected in the cadence of cowboy poetry. Whether focused on the essence of life on the range, or exploring the disruption of natural range cycles, the works selected for the exhibition elicit a variety of visual rhythms. Examples include Karen Kitchel’s Seasonal Overture in which intricate paintings of grass evoke seasonal transitions and Ed Ruscha’s Clock which literally conflates the passage of time with the cycles of nature.

**A poignant large-scale installation, Scott Hudson’s Bison, invites contemplation on the disruption of natural range cycles and raises questions about the historical and contemporary Western landscape.** The works included in Rhythms of a Cowboy Poem elicit a variety of visual rhythms ranging from depicting the essence of life on the range to exploring patterns of environmental sustainability.

In addition to paintings, photographs and sculptural works, Rhythms of a Cowboy Poem will also include an original audiovisual component. Set against the backdrop of dramatic Western landscapes, recitations by three renowned cowboy poets—Joel Nelson and Andy Hedges from Texas, and Jerry Brooks from Utah—are woven together to create a collective reading of the prologue of Grass. A testament to the generations of voices that keep Buck Ramsey’s words alive, the film celebrates the rich heritage of cowboy poetry.

The Nevada Museum of Art exhibition is presented as part of the Art + Environment series, an initiative of the Museum that brings together community, artists and scholars to explore the interaction between people and their environments.

Between Grass and Sky and all supporting programs are generously sponsored by the E. L. Wiegand Foundation. The E.L. Wiegand Foundation supports programs and projects of exemplary organizations in the fields of education, health and medical research, civic and community affairs, arts and cultural affairs and public affairs.