

Mountain Lion!

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Durango, CO – The Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, in conjunction with the San Juan Mountains Association, the Southern Ute Tribe, and Durango Nature Studies, have partnered with Sorrel Sky Gallery to open a major exhibit entitled *Mountain Lion!* “We have been chosen to participate in this distinguished public awareness effort by providing major works of art by artists that showcase this sleek predator,” said Shanan Campbell Wells of Sorrel Sky Gallery. She went on to add “the elusive and nocturnal mountain lion is a favorite among many Western artists, and is represented in sculpture, painting and jewelry.”

The goal of the exhibit is to create an understanding of the nature of these predators and their long, historic relationship with people. The exhibit blends science, history, and art to provide a comprehensive look at this mysterious creature. The exhibit will show for a year at the exhibition gallery at Fort Lewis College, before traveling to other museums and nature centers throughout the greater Southwest.

Included in the exhibit is Sorrel Sky Gallery’s nationally acclaimed artist Gerald Balciar, whose beautiful bronze “Canyon Princess,” evokes the grace and power of a female cougar. The piece was conceived when Balciar created a monumental sculpture from a single 31-ton block of Colorado marble with the final rendering weighing more than eight tons. The monumental sculpture is placed in the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City and graces the entrance to the Gaylord Exhibition Wing where it serves as guardian of all that lies within.

On canvas, Edward Aldrich’s oil painting, “Cat Perch,” is another noble addition to the exhibit. This painting is an example of this artists’s dedication to reaching beyond the realistic rendering of wildlife in the natural world. He is convinced that conveying the inherent being of an animal is integral to his work. His style breathes life into his subjects and evokes within the viewer the feeling that he or she is actually a witness to the scene. The viewer is not left to simply look and appreciate, but is drawn into experiencing the essence of what is depicted.

Also on display at Sorrel Sky is Aldrich’s “Lion’s Lair,” portraying a fully mature cougar in graceful repose. “My best paintings are based on animals I have seen in the wild. I’ll do paintings directly from those photographs – I want to keep the feel of the scene I saw.” Edward creates his oil paintings on masonite in a big open studio which is part of his home. Several layers of glazing convey texture and gives the colors a brilliant depth.

“Bathing Beauty,” by Star Liana York, is the stunning cougar sculpture displayed on a platform at the *Mountain Lion!* exhibit. The life-size cougar in repose depicts the peace and grandeur of the mountain lion, in the grandest sense of the word. Star has received international acclaim as a prominent sculptor, and deserving so. She was chosen as one of the 30 most influential artists by Southwest Art Magazine. Her body of work has reflected the cultural diversity and history of the area. She is also inspired by native wildlife and mythology, and the mysteries of ancient sacred sites.

Michael Tatom’s “Lookout Puma,” is a bronze miniature that captures the detail of the mountain lion standing on a rock. Michael has magically captured the shape and movement of the animal through his simple, graceful technique.

“The main focus of my work is to translate into bronze the essence of the animal, to capture some movement or instinct and present it in a simple stylized form,” Tatom proclaims. “The last, and one of my favorite parts of the process, is the patina. The different colors and textures have a dramatic effect on the feel of the finished sculpture.”

Jim Eppler’s striking painting, “Cougar,” reflects Eppler’s respect and appreciation for nature that has allowed his art to flow so freely. His wildlife paintings capture naturalist Henry Beston’s beliefs about the grandness of the creatures of nature. “In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear.”

Jewelry artisan, Ben Nighthorse, features sterling silver bracelets with cougar etchings. Nighthorse, an internationally acclaimed Northern Cheyenne artist, believes depicting animals in his jewelry designs is a way to be in harmony with nature, as well as reflect the symbolic meaning of the animal's spirit.

Sorrel Sky Gallery is honored to feature our artists in the *Mountain Lion!* exhibit, and throughout the gallery. These beautiful renditions of this mysterious creature help us to understand how humans and nature must learn to coexist as our habitat begins to increasingly overlap one of the fiercest predators in the continental United States.

For more information visit the Center of Southwest Studies website: <http://swcenter.fortlewis.edu>.

Photo 1: "Cougar" by Jim Eppler

Photo 2: "Canyon Princess" by Gerald Baciari

Photo 3: Shanan Campbell Wells, Owner of Sorrel Sky Gallery

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WHERE :

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