



JOHN BANOVICH: King of Beasts

NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART
November 9, 2019-February 16, 2020

THE WITTE MUSEUM
from April 4, 2020-August 2, 2020



NEVADA MUSEUM OF
ART

Donald W. Reynolds Center for the Visual Arts
E.L. Wiegand Gallery 160 West Liberty Street,
Reno, Nevada, 89501



The Witte Museum
Susan Naylor Center
3801 Broadway St, San Antonio, TX 78209

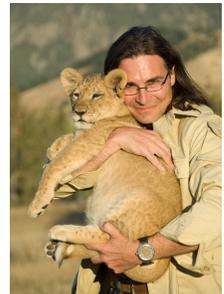
The Nevada Museum of Art will organize an exhibition titled *King of Beasts: A Study of the African Lion*, featuring paintings by esteemed wildlife painter John Banovich, alongside historical artworks dating from the 15th through 20th centuries by internationally renowned artists such as Delacroix, Dürer, Friese, Kuhnert, Rembrandt and Stubbs, all focused on depicting the extraordinary African Lion. An internationally recognized artist who has studied lions for decades, Banovich has created a body of work that is also an homage to these animals. *King of Beasts* features more than forty artworks as well as three-dimensional displays that explore questions about mankind's deep fear, love, and admiration for these creatures. The exhibition spans nearly twenty-five years of work and assembles his body of work focused on African Lions for the very first time.

In Africa, the lion has served as a symbol of strength, bravery, and physical prowess among many cultures. However, today nearly all wild lions are found within small regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, and a tiny population exists in India. Outside of protected areas, the African Lion is disappearing at an alarming rate. Conservationists agree that the remaining population must be protected if these magnificent creatures are to survive.

King of Beasts will travel from the Nevada Museum of Art to the Witte Museum in San Antonio, Texas.



Born in Butte, Montana, John Banovich is known internationally for his large, dramatic portrayals of iconic wildlife. Today, Banovich's work can be found in private and corporate collections, as well as museums throughout the world. In addition to his artworks, he uses his paintings to raise awareness about imperiled species through Banovich Wildscapes Foundation. BWF is a nonprofit (501c3) organization fostering cooperative efforts to conserve the earth's wildlife and wild places benefiting the wildlife and the people that live there. BWF supports programs that promote habitat protection, science-based wildlife management and sustainable tourism.



King of Beasts: A Study of the African Lion will be on view from November 9, 2019 through February 16, 2020 at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Nevada.

PREMIER DINNER

Fred W. Smith Penthouse
Nightingale Sky Room | Stacie Mathewson Sky Plaza
at the Nevada Museum of Art
Wednesday, February 5, 2020

C John Banovich, *Game of Lions*, 2014. Oil on Belgian Linen, 50 x 75 in.

↑ John Banovich, *Man Eaters of Tsavo*, 2002 Oil on Belgian Linen 50 x 80 in.

↑ Display: The Lion's modern day enemies.

King of Beasts

From the Nevada Art Museum:

Paleolithic cave paintings found in Southern France and dating back 30,000 years provide our earliest glimpses of lion ancestry. Through the ages, carved lions have guarded ancient cities and sacred sites as well as symbolizing the majesty and nobility of nearly every civilization. Mesopotamian culture, Judaism, and Roman civilization contained numerous references, symbols, and countless artifacts glorifying *Panthera leo*. Carved figures of lions stand guard at London's Trafalgar Square and in front of the New York Public Library. Their images appear on flags, automobiles, altars, coins, gondolas, sports teams, and as children's toys. Clearly, lions have permeated our consciousness since the dawn of humankind. In Africa, the lion has served as a symbol of strength, bravery, and physical prowess among many cultures. However, today nearly all the wild lions are found within small regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, and a tiny population exists in India. Outside of protected areas, the African Lion is disappearing at an alarming rate.



In a continent of one billion people, the population of lions is estimated to be as few as 20,000 today. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species has classified *Panthera leo* as a vulnerable species, and conservationists agree that the remaining population must be protected if these magnificent creatures are to survive.

Considering these facts, this exhibition presents paintings by esteemed wildlife painter John Banovich, an internationally recognized artist who has studied lions for decades, and the Founder of the Lion P.R.I.D.E. Initiative, as well as paintings by past masters, displays and artifacts.

King of Beasts presents an unprecedented display that serves as an homage to the lion and explores questions about mankind's deep fear, love, and admiration for these creatures as well as what the future holds for "Big Things with Big Teeth" and those that must share the landscape with them.

The exhibition is accompanied by a large format hardcover book, which encompasses the work in the exhibition along with nearly 75 more works and an essay by Laurence Frank, PhD. Frank who has been a research associate at the University of California, Berkeley since 1984, first as part of the Berkeley Hyena Project and currently in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. His work has focused on predators in Kenya for forty years, including twenty years studying the behavioral ecology and endocrinology of the spotted hyena before turning to conservation research.

As the plight of the African Lion has been prominently featured across media platforms recently, the cultural significance of *Panthera leo* could not be timelier.

King of Beasts

About the Artwork – Past Masters:

Historical artworks dating from the 15th through 20th centuries by internationally renowned artists such as Delacroix, Dürer, Friese, Kuhnert, Rembrandt, Stubbs and others will be on display and will express man's depiction of the lion throughout history. Three dimension displays will give an awareness of the modern day plight of the lions and a glimpse into their future without real-world solutions to the human/animal conflict that is currently raging.

Works by artists such as Wilhelm Kuhnert (above right), recognized today as one of the greatest wildlife painters, were the inspiration for successive generations of animal painters. Set in the Ngorongoro crater in modern-day Tanzania, the present work epitomizes Wilhelm Kuhnert's dramatic wildlife tableaux. Kuhnert studied under the animal painter Paul Meyerheim in Berlin. His first trip to Africa in 1891-2 provided him with the opportunity to study the animals of the Serengeti and Masai for the first time in their natural habitat. Kuhnert spent much of his time in the field, returning intermittently to Berlin to work up his sketches into finished paintings.



The future of lions surviving in our modern world is not a story to be written by scientists, conservationists or NGO's alone. It will be determined by the greater society as a whole. Do we value, "Big Things with Big Teeth" enough to bear the brunt of coexistence in these developing, human dominated landscapes? Will the habitat they require, receive them as an economic asset, competitive with land other use choices, or as an economic burden? Will we value lions and other large carnivores enough to set aside large, open spaces for them as our human population continues to grow? In King of Beasts we will explore the African lion's former range, where they are today and where they might be tomorrow. How will they be able to coexist into the last half of this century, especially when Africa is expected to swell to over 4 billion people? We all must answer this question: Is there room for African Lions in our modern world?
John Banovich

↑ Wilhelm Kuhnert, A Lion and a Lioness Stalking Zebra in the Ngorongoro Crater, Oil on Canvas, 35.5 x 48.5 in

↑ Samples of the depiction of lions in art through history, (1496, 1650-52, 1762)

↑ John Banovich and deadly gin traps confiscated from poacher's trap lines that were designed and then set to capture animals for the illegal bush meat trade. Lions, leopards and other carnivores are also victims.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM

Founded in 1931, the Nevada Museum of Art is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM).

Co-founded in 1931 by Dr. James Church, an early climate scientist, humanist, and lover of art, the Museum has long understood the importance of examining how humans interact with their environments. The present Museum facility, designed by architect Will Bruder, opened in 2003 at the heart of Reno's downtown Liberty district. The four-level, 70,000-square-foot building is inspired by geological formations in northern Nevada's Black Rock Desert, and serves as a visual metaphor for the institution's scholarly focus on art and environment.

The Museum's proximity to the San Francisco Bay Area, the Sierra Nevada, Lake Tahoe, and the surrounding Great Basin desert region places it at the nexus of both awe-inspiring scenery and a rapidly changing landscape. It is an ideal place for dynamic conversations about the ways humans creatively interact with environments.

THE CENTER FOR ART + ENVIRONMENT

The Center for Art + Environment (CA+E) is the research arm of the Museum, an internationally recognized research center whose mission is to be a global leader in supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center assembles unique archives that reveal the breadth of artistic practices that artists use to intervene in stressed environments, to work with scientists and indigenous peoples, and to explore some of the harshest places on the planet.

The CA+E holds archives that represent the work of more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including materials from prominent artists Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria, Ugo Rondinone, and Helen and Newton Harrison. The archives embrace an extraordinarily diverse field that includes classic Land Art works, art & science projects in Aboriginal Australian communities, and urban social practices by artists such as Fritz Haeg and Kim Abeles. CA+E archives also include materials from important organizations like the Center for Land Use Interpretation; London-based Cape Farewell, the internationally renowned art and climate change program; and the world's largest nonprofit desert education program/arts festival, Burning Man.



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ABOUT THE MUSEUM

The Witte Museum inspires people to shape the future of Texas through relevant and transformative experiences in nature, science and culture.

Botanist and high school teacher Ellen Schultz began her goal of starting a museum for the growing city of San Antonio in 1923. She began fundraising to acquire the well-known H.P. Attwater natural history collection the same year. Schultz and other interested local citizens including Lena McAllister, Ethel Drought and Mayor John Tobin formed the San Antonio Museum Association. San Antonio businessman Alfred W. Witte died September 22, 1925, leaving \$65,000 to fund a museum in Brackenridge Park. The Witte Museum opened just over a year later to a huge community celebration on October 8, 1926.

After many years of growth and expansion of the museum, its collection and campus, Marise McDermott was appointed as President and CEO of the Witte Museum in 2004 to usher in a new era of growth for the Witte Museum. Under McDermott the Witte Museum has made great strides in expanding the facility and continuing the standards set by Ellen Quillin for the original Witte Museum. In 2012 the Robert J. and Helen C. Kleberg South Texas Heritage Center opened in the historic Centennial building next to the original Witte Museum. McDermott led the transformation of the H-E-B Science Treehouse into the H-E-B Body Adventure that opened in 2014 as the first interactive health experience in the United States.

The Witte also opened the B. Naylor Morton Research and Collections Center in 2014 to display the more than 300,000 artifacts in visible storage, as well as offer space for scholars, archivists and school children to have close encounters with the still growing collection. In 2016 the The Mays Family Center opened serving as a multi-purpose exhibition and special events center spanning 19,000 square-feet.

The New Witte Museum and the Zachry Family Acequia Garden opened in 2017 with a new H-E-B Lantern, Valero Great Hall, Naylor Family Dinosaur Gallery, McLean Family Texas Wild Gallery and Kittie West Nelson Ferguson People of the Pecos Gallery, all with accompany LABS for school children and families.

Today, the Witte Museum exemplifies where nature, science and culture meet.



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The Witte Museum
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