

Cowboy

Sep 29, 2023 — Feb 18, 2024 | MCA Museum of Contemporary Art
Denver, Colorado, US

Opening September 29, 2023, and on view through February 18, 2024, *Cowboy* will bring together loans and new commissions from 27 artists representing a wide range of perspectives including Asian American artists, Latinx artists, and Native artists. The exhibition aims to shift the narrative of this figure's cultural power and significance to be both historically accurate and creatively imaginative.

“Using the lens of art and artists, this sweeping exhibition will explore the origins of the American cowboy and how the figure and its mythology persist today. *Cowboy* speaks to the museum's ambition to challenge, revise, and reconceive how such a myth originated and might be probed in exciting, courageous, and nuanced ways,” said Nora Burnett Abrams, Mark G. Falcone Director of MCA Denver.

“The American cowboy is vividly and enduringly present in the popular mindset, as a character, a seductive ideal, and as a laborer, but most established narratives fail to acknowledge the wildly diverse histories and lived experiences surrounding this profession,” added Miranda Lash, Ellen Bruss Senior Curator at MCA Denver.

The exhibition asks: How does the myth of the cowboy exist today? How has the cowboy as an archetype of masculinity shaped how we think about gender now? What assumptions do we have about cowboys' relationship to the land and how does this relate to the real, lived experiences of contemporary cowboys? By presenting a broad range of perspectives, this exhibition aims to break apart the homogenous ideal of the cowboy as a white, cisgender American male and showcase the diverse manifestations of this figure across many different communities and in a variety of media.

Featuring artworks largely made during recent years, *Cowboy* will include contributions by John Baldessari, R. Alan Brooks, Mel Chin, Gregg Deal, Angela Ellsworth, rafa esparza, Juan Fuentes, Karl Haendel, Luis Jiménez, Kahlil Joseph, Deana Lawson, Grace Kennison, Matthew J. Mahoney, Laurel Nakadate, Richard Prince, Otis Kwame Kye Quaiocoe, Akasha Rabut, Lucy Raven, Ken Taylor Reynaga, Jaye Rhee, Yumi Roth & Emmanuel David, Ana Segovia, Amy Sherald, Stephanie Syjuco, Kenneth Tam, Andy Warhol, and Nathan Young. The exhibition will also include newly commissioned work by rafa esparza, Nathan Young, as well as Colorado-based artists R. Alan Brooks and Gregg Deal.

Cowboy is co-curated by Nora Burnett Abrams and Miranda Lash. Lead support for this exhibition is generously provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

A fully illustrated catalogue co-published with Rizzoli will accompany the exhibition with essays by Nora Burnett Abrams, Myeshia Babers, Jongwoo Jeremy Kim, an interview with rafa esparza by Miranda Lash, and a graphic essay by R. Alan Brooks. The catalogue will be produced through the special support of the Blue Rider Group of Morgan Stanley.