

Texas artist begins anniversary exhibit

The Texas Sesquicentennial is still five years away, but one of the state's leading western artists is already working on the big celebration.

Cowboy artist Jim Thomas has begun his five-year documentation of 150 years of Texas history in sculpture.

The awesome project will culminate in 1986, the year of the state's Sesquicentennial, which is shaping up to be the birthday bash of the century. Thomas has even moved his studio from Amarillo to Austin because he believes the Capital City is the logical place to carry out his historical mission.

Thomas' authentically detailed bronze sculptures depicting the lifestyle of the modern cowboy grace art collections worldwide, including that of former President Gerald Ford.

Thomas will participate actively in the Texas Sesquicentennial, primarily through the small but elitist Texas Cowboy Association (TCA) of which he is president. To commemorate the Sesquicentennial, he is working on TCA's second book, "150 years of the Texas Cowboy," and is planning special art shows featuring the TCA art work which will illustrate the book.

Thomas will concentrate almost entirely on historic art. He will also help preserve the state's historic buildings by reproducing and restoring the architectural artifacts, such as hinges, door knobs and fixtures. He prefers to do his own bronze casting operating out of his studio foundry.

Thomas' latest sculpture reflects the historic theme. "Cowboy Country Club," nearing completion, is a large sculpture depicting a turn-of-the-century campsite scene. The centerpiece is a 24-inch bronze chuck wagon with all working parts, wood-grained and detailed down to the last nut and bolt.

"It's accurate because it's scaled from my own personal chuck wagon," Thomas said.

The twelve figures surrounding the wagon include "Too Thin to Plow and Too Thick to Drink" (cowboys pouring coffee), "Sourdough Man" (camp cook with rolling pin) and "A Stitch in Time" (cowboy repairing saddle).

The "Country Club" edition will have just five castings with the artist retaining the final one. The chuck wagon and individual figures are available singly in limited editions.

"Forgotten Ancestors" is an even larger sculpture of a full-scale Longhorn steer skull with five-foot horns, partially buried in the sand with a Spanish Conquistador skull and helmet.

Like many cowboy artists, Thomas is self-taught. A western historian and former journalist, he was a successful advertising executive when he started dabbling in art 17 years ago. At the time cowboy art was just beginning to gain recognition. Thomas did a five-state market study which indicated western art would be the coming rage.

An expert photographer, Thomas began riding with working cowboys, capturing authentic scenes from which to sculpt his realistic bronzes. Within three years, he established himself as a western artist.

His award-winning sculpture has been shown in major exhibits and been published in leading art journals, the Wall Street Journal, Southern Living and other national publications.

And his earlier market study proved correct. Cowboy — or western — art has captured the fancy of collectors worldwide, becoming one of the most successful art forms in the world.



Thousands of participants jammed the San Jacinto River in last year's KRBE Ramblin' Raft Race. This year's race will be on the Brazos River near Richmond, Texas. Sailing time is 11 a.m. Saturday.

B-CS to be swamped by new movie theaters

By Colette Hutchings
Battalion Staff

Bryan-College Station won't be at a loss for movie theaters before long.

Nine new theaters are planned for the area, with six possibly opening in time for the rash of new movies coming in December.

Bill Schulman, owner and manager of Campus Theater, Manor East Theaters and the Skyway Twin Drive-Inn, is building a six-screen complex on 29th Street in Bryan, next to the Drive-Inn.

Schulman's son Craig said the company hopes to have the complex completed and operating by mid-December.

"We've had a lot of setbacks, but so far that's when we hope to have it completed," Schulman said.

Plitt Theater Corp., a franchise already operating in Bryan, has plans to open a three-theater complex in the Post Oak Mall being built off High-

way 30 in College Station.

Bill Curtis, vice-president of Plitt Southern Theaters, said the original plan was to build a 5-theater complex outside the mall. The theaters were to be completed by Christmas.

Since plans changed, however, Curtis said he doesn't expect the 3-theater-complex to be ready until February.

Schulman said the influx of new theaters will definitely increase the number of movies in the area but doubts that new movies will be shown here any sooner than they are now. Many movies don't make it to B-CS until after they have completed runs in larger cities.

"A lot depends on the release date of the movie," Schulman said. Bigger cities are given different film release dates than the smaller cities, he said, and since B-CS falls into the latter, most of the movies have been out a while by the time they play here.

Ramblin' rafts set sail Saturday

Hundreds of people will be rollin' on the river this Saturday during the third annual KRBE Ramblin' Raft Race.

The race, sponsored by the Houston radio station, will be on the Brazos River, just outside of Richmond. Last year's race drew over 12,000 participants and nearly as many modes of flotation.

This year, free music will be provided by Hall and Oates and Silver Condor, beginning at 12:30. Hall and Oates appear at 4.

The race is coordinated by the American Rafting Association (ARA). Competition is divided into two categories. The first is for Rubber Rafts, inflatable rafts made of canvas, vinyl or rubber. Participants in this category range from five-man inflatable rafts down to the lowly innertube.

The second division is Ramblin' Rafts, which is where the fun begins, as entrants design, engineer and build their own crafts.

Prizes are awarded in each division, with special awards for most original raft, most spirited crew and raft that collects the most litter during the race.

Registration is open to anyone in the state. Richmond is located 15 miles southwest of Houston off Highway 90A.

For more information, call the radio station at 713-960-0123.

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Focus will accept any items submitted for publication, although the decision to publish lies solely with the editor. Deadline is 5 p.m. the Thursday before publication.

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On the cover: Are you a video maniac? The number one game seems to change every month, but the players - bug-eyed, quarter popping button-pushers — never change. For an in-depth look at video games and the culture they have produced, see pages 8 and 9. Cover photo by Dave Einsel.