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'DECORATIVE ARMS: TREASURES FROM THE ROBERT M. LEE COLLECTION' OFFERS A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE THE ARTISTRY OF THE WORLD'S MOST RENOWNED ENGRAVERS

'Decorative Arms' features never-before-seen items from the 16th century through today that highlight the often-overlooked talents of artisans who incorporate historical decorative traditions into their contemporary craft. It will be on view at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno from November 16, 2019 through February 16, 2020.



Reno, Nev. (October 10, 2019) – This autumn one of the most celebrated decorative arms collections will leave the vault for a rare public exhibition. ***Decorative Arms: Treasures from the Robert M. Lee Collection*** includes more than 100 objects dating from as early as the 1500s through the modern era, showcasing the skills of some of the most renowned arms makers and engravers in the world. Many of the objects on loan have never-before-been seen by the public. They are drawn from the Robert M. Lee Collection, known to an international community of enthusiasts as one of the finest arms collections in the United States. Organized by the Nevada Museum of Art, ***Decorative Arms: Treasures from the Robert M. Lee Collection*** is the largest public presentation of the collection to date. The exhibition will be on view at the downtown Reno, Nevada, museum November 16, 2019 through February 16, 2020. Several noteworthy programs will take place during this time, including premiere talks by Dr. John Byck and Dr. Pierre Terjanian from the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Ashley Hlebinsky, curator of the Cody Firearms Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West; and Richard Moll from the Autry Museum of the American West.

Decorative Arms focuses on the art of engraving and the role of the engraver, with a special emphasis on how historical traditions inform and influence the craftsmanship of these artisans today. With a rich history that reaches back to the Medieval and Renaissance eras, embellishing arms and armor is a challenging artistic endeavor. The design process involves collaboration among sculptors of steel and wood, goldsmiths, silversmiths; lock, stock, and barrel makers; and engravers. These talented artisans create mythological, hunting, and wildlife scenes that are framed and enhanced by ornamental designs on what have been described by some scholars as “miniature canvases.”

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Some of the engravers highlighted in the exhibition include J. Paul Brown and Alan M. Brown (known often as the Brown Brothers), Rashid el Hadi, Firmo Fracassi, Philippe Grifnée, Ken C. Hunt, Alain Lovenberg, Frédérique Lepinois, and Gianfranco Pedersoli. These world-renowned artisans hail from a variety of countries with rich engraving traditions, including Belgium, England, Italy, and the United States. Their engravings appear on items manufactured by Pietro Beretta, Colt, Holland & Holland, James Purdey & Sons, Westley Richards, and Winchester, among others.

Decorative Arms juxtaposes historic arms with modern pieces to illustrate not only the scope of western arms history, but also the depth and breadth of the Lee Collection. The exhibition explores a variety of themes including European roots and hunting motifs; the training, tools, and process of engraving as fine art; the role of silver and goldsmiths in crafting these fine objects; and the history of the collector, Robert M. Lee (1927-2016). Lee was a renowned collector of arms and fine automobiles, and a lifelong enthusiast of exploration, conservation, and hunting. Raised in rural New York, he was taught a love of nature and the outdoors by his parents from a young age. Given Lee's lifetime interest in collectible arms and armor, he helped to support the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the Robert M. Lee Gallery of American Arms & Armor is named in his honor.

Approximately 15 historic arms will be displayed in the show, dating from as early as the 1500s, with examples spanning the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. These historic firearms will be highlighted in special jewel-box wall cases throughout the entire exhibition, allowing them to serve as a reference to the modern arms, which will be grouped either by engraver or national origin. In addition to firearms, other objects in the exhibition include a multi-bladed folding exhibition display knife by Joseph Rodgers & Sons, an antique European pistol sword, and suits of armor, both miniature and full scale.

Over the course of the exhibition the Nevada Museum of Art will offer several public programs on a variety of themes presented in **Decorative Arms**:

Great Firearms: A Historical Perspective

Saturday, November 16 | 11 am

Dr. John Byck from the Metropolitan Museum of Art will explore key aspects of fine historical firearm design from the sixteenth century through the modern period. From ingenious mechanisms to beautiful decorations to perfect balance, Byck will examine relationships between early engravings and the decorative arts.

\$12 | \$8 Museum members

Going too Far: The Limits of Conservation

Friday, December 6 | noon

A specialist in firearms preservation, Richard Moll, Chief Conservator at the Autry Museum of the American West, will discuss the preservation of arms for both museums and the private collector.

\$10 | FREE Museum members

Shootin' from the Hip with Michael Mikel

Friday, January 10 | noon

Thursday, January 30 | 6 pm

Sunday, February 9 | 11 am

Historian, futurist, and co-founder of Burning Man, Michael Mikel brings his unique counter-culture ideologies to a series of guided tours. Known on the Playa as "Danger Ranger," Mikel draws on his Texas roots and love of the West as he presents a personalized introduction to decorative arms.

\$10 | Free Museum Members

The Art of Collecting with a Purpose

Thursday, January 16 | 6 pm

Ashley Hlebinsky, Robert W. Woodruff Curator of the Cody Firearms Museum, discusses the evolution of collecting since the 16th century, and examines how private passion impacts public display.

\$12 | \$8 Museum members

FILM: And With Him Came the West

Thursday, January 23 | 6 pm

After the fight at the O.K. Corral in 1881, Wyatt Earp became famous in his own time. The gunfight epitomized the wild west: thrilling duels between the good guys and the bad guys. Remarks by screenwriter and producer Tim Kirk follows the screening.

\$10 | \$8 Museum members

Hollywood and the Wild West

Friday, January 24 | noon

The Wild West mythos inspired a history of film and launched the careers of cowboy stars like John Wayne, Hopalong Cassidy, Tim McCoy, and Bill Elliot. Screenwriter, producer, and film buff Tim Kirk discusses the careers of Hollywood's gunslingers and changing attitudes towards the West.

\$10 | FREE Museum members

The Embellishment of Firearms: An Art of its Own

Thursday, February 6 | 11 am

Dr. Pierre Terjanian, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Curator in Charge, Department of Arms and Armor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, will discuss the significant role arms have played in establishing original trends and styles, encouraging great artists to demonstrate their full measure.

\$12 | \$8 Museum members

Tom Russell in Concert

Thursday, February 6 | 7:30 pm

Dubbed the "greatest living folk-country songwriter" by Rolling Stone, singer, songwriter, painter, and essayist, Tom Russell performs a special concert in the Sky Room.

\$40 | \$30 Museum members

Decorative Arms: Treasures from the Robert M. Lee Collection is the largest public presentation to date of objects from what is considered one of the finest firearms collections in the United States. This rare public presentation of more than 100 items was organized with curatorial support from Conor Fitzgerald, Guy Wilson, and Signa Pendegraft. **Decorative Arms** will be on view November 16, 2019 through February 16, 2020, at the Nevada Museum of Art, 160 West Liberty Street in downtown Reno, Nevada.

Access high-resolution images and supporting media materials for the **Decorative Arms** exhibition here:

<http://bit.ly/DecorativeArmsMedia>.

Decorative Arms: Treasures from the Robert M. Lee Collection was made possible by the generosity of these sponsors: **Lead Sponsor:** Whittier Trust, Investment & Wealth Management; **Major Sponsors:** The Bretzlaff Foundation; The Thelma B. and Thomas P. Hart Foundation; Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority; **Sponsors:** Anonymous; Barrick Gold; Clark/Sullivan Construction; John C. Deane; Jenny and Garrett Sutton | Corporate Direct; **Supporting Sponsors:** Debbie Day; Matt Day, Sr.; Haynie & Company; **Additional Sponsor:** Anonymous; **Media Sponsor:** Western Art & Architecture.

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The Nevada Museum of Art is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the Reno-based institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, and Trevor Paglen's *Orbital Reflector*.

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