

DIVE INTO A SUMMER OF WILD SURVIVAL AT THE BRISCOE

Survival of the Fittest: Envisioning Wildlife and Wilderness with the Big Four Opens June 14

San Antonio, TX – (April 2024) Embark on a captivating journey into the wild, where nature’s beauty and the resilience of nature take center stage during [*Survival of the Fittest: Envisioning Wildlife and Wilderness with the Big Four, Masterworks from the Rijksmuseum Twenthe and the National Museum of Wildlife Art*](#) at the Briscoe Western Art Museum this summer. Opening June 14, the exhibition is included with museum admission and features an array of programming for everyone to enjoy.

The title *Survival of the Fittest* references Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, which had a revolutionary impact on how people from Western cultures envisioned our relationship with the other animals on Earth. In the post-Darwin era, a group of classically trained painters now known as the Big Four emerged and helped establish a vision of wildlife and nature that remains with us today. German Richard Friese (1854–1918) is the Big Four’s elder, followed chronologically by Swede Bruno Liljefors (1860–1939), German Wilhelm Kuhnert (1865–1926), and German-American Carl Rungius (1869–1959).

While other institutions hold significant collections of work by individual members of the Big Four, the Rijksmuseum Twenthe in Enschede, Netherlands, and the National Museum of Wildlife Art are the only two museums in the world to hold masterpieces by each member of the group. *Survival of the Fittest* brings together the best paintings from these two esteemed institutions for the first time. Featuring 45 masterworks, as well as four by Robert “Bob” Frederick Kuhn (1920–2007), the exhibition will be on view at the Briscoe through September 8. The Kuhn works are on loan exclusively to the Briscoe and showcase how Kuhn – one of the most prolific American wildlife artists – was greatly influenced by the Big Four. Separately, the Briscoe’s permanent collection includes “Rainbow Rams” by Carl Rungius, giving everyone 50 works to explore.

“These four artists traveled and observed wildlife in their natural environment, studying each species to better capture not only the details, but the essence of these animals,” explains Liz Jackson, President and CEO of the Briscoe Western Art Museum. “Today, we can tune into nature documentaries and see stunning photographs of these animals, but these artists didn’t have that ability – and neither did the public. Their work captured these animals, sharing a realistic portrayal that stands the test of time, showcasing the impact of Darwin’s work.”

Survival of the Fittest: Envisioning Wildlife and Wilderness with the Big Four, Masterworks from the Rijksmuseum Twenthe and the National Museum of Wildlife Art is curated by Adam Duncan Harris, Grainger/Kerr Director of the Carl Rungius Catalogue Raisonné and

organized by the National Museum of Wildlife Art. The exhibition is sponsored in part by The City of San Antonio, Jan McCaleb Elliott, Jessica Elliott Middleton and The Texas Commission on the Arts.

The West Starts Here at the Briscoe

Showcasing the purely American art form of Western art, the Briscoe Western Art Museum celebrates the past, present and future of the storied genre. The museum is open Thursday through Monday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and closed to the public on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Admission is free for children 12 and under and for active duty military members, while retired military receive discounted admission. The museum proudly participates in Museums For All, Blue Star Museums and Bank of America Museums on Us. Located on the south end of the River Walk near the Arneson River Theatre and La Villita, convenient parking is available at the Riverbend Garage directly adjacent to the museum or one of many downtown surface lots. [Museum hours](#), [parking](#) and admission details are available online.

About [The Briscoe Western Art Museum](#): *Preserving and presenting the art, history and culture of the American West through engaging exhibitions, educational programs and public events reflective of the region's rich traditions and shared heritage, the Briscoe Western Art Museum is located on the San Antonio River Walk at 210 W. Market Street in the beautifully restored 1930s former San Antonio Public Library building. Named in honor of the late Texas Gov. Dolph Briscoe Jr. and his wife, Janey Slaughter Briscoe, the museum includes the three-story Jack Guenther Pavilion, used for event rentals and programs, and the outdoor McNutt Sculpture Garden. Follow the Briscoe on social media, @BriscoeMuseum.*