

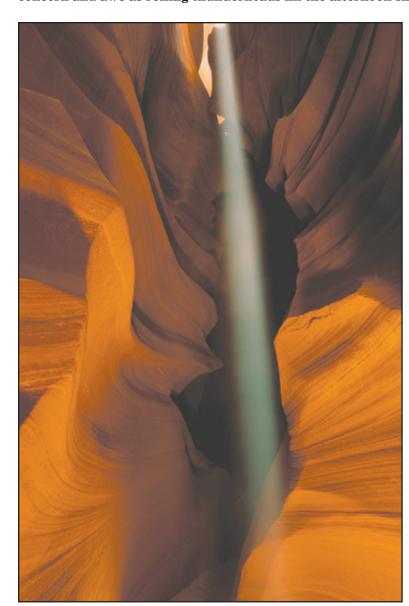
Wyoming, 1988: Michael Quinton immortalized a bull elk standing in the early morning smoke of the Yellowstone National Park fires.



Nebraska, 2004: Jim Richardson's image captures workers pausing while haying in the sand hills to watch with concern and awe as rolling thunderheads fill the afternoon sky.



Oregon, 1997: William Allard photographed American Indian Beauty Pageant winner Acosia Red Elk waiting for a parade in the tipi village at the Pendleton Round-Up.



Arizona, 2007: A shaft of light bisects the Navajo Sandstone shapes of Antelope Canyon in Frans Lanting's photo.

Best of the WEST

Who: Ansel Adams, William Albert Allard and other photographers

What: 'National Geographic Greatest Photographs of the American West' exhibit When: Reception 5:30 p.m., Allard talk 6:30 p.m. Friday; family activities 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday; exhibit hangs through April 28

Where: National Museum of Wildlife Art How much: Free for members, \$5 for others Friday; with museum admission Saturday on Web: WildlifeArt.org, PhotographsOfTheWest.org

By Lindsay Wood

his weekend, the National Museum of Wildlife Art will ed, simultaneous 10-museum debut of "National Geographic's Greatest Photographs of the American West."

With an opening reception at 5:30 p.m. Friday, the wildlife art museum will display a photographic narrative, both romantic and realistic, of the ideals, legends and majesty of the American West. The official public opening is Saturday, when there will be activities for families from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

A four-person curatorial team — James McNutt, the museum's president; Adam Harris, its curator; Rich National Geographic Books. Clarkson, National Geographic's

the best work from files spanning

"National Geographic Greatest Photographs of the American West' simultaneously," McNutt said. "The exhibition presents a powerful and nuanced portrait of the West over more than a century, and it's exciting that the medium of photography allows multiple openings across the country for greater impact in sharing take part in an unprecedent- the combined vision of such an important group of photographers."

Underwritten by the Mays Family Foundation, the exhibit comprises 75 images from famed lensmen such as William Henry Jackson, Ansel Adams, William Albert Allard and Joel Sartore. Some of the photographs will be familiar; others have never before been seen by the public. A soft-cover companion book designed by Brainerd and featuring 185 photographs from National Geographic's files is available for \$30 at the museum shop and online from

Allard, whose photograph of 1970s former director of photography; and buckaroo Brian Morris graces the Kate Brainerd, Geographic's former cover of the "Greatest Photographs

picture editor and graphic designer of the American West" book, will historical, educational approach to — chose each photograph from Geo-speak at the reception about some selecting photos for the book and exgraphic's image collection to reflect of the stories behind his five photo- hibit, while Clarkson and Brainerd graphs in the exhibit and 14 in the leaned toward a more editorial point book. He also plans to take questions of view, Clarkson said. from the audience.

has opened at so many U.S. venues - photographer and he's been hooked. Clarkson said ever since. On the cusp of his 49th year as a professional photographer, Allard said he considers the images chosen for the exhibit and book some hit on a few of the same things as well." of his most iconic works.

A love of the West is what prompted McNutt and Clarkson to hatch the lunch in 2007. The National Museum of Wildlife Art is part of Museums West, a collaborative of 13 museums that focus on the advancement of Western American art, history and alyst for the large-scale opening at 10 of the 13 museums.

Using his connections with Nationthe magazine's 100,000-photo vault, and the exhibit idea gained momentum. The team whittled the number of potential photographs from 2,000 to 500, then sorted the chosen images by four categories: legends, encounters, boundaries and visions.

McNutt and Harris took a more

The curatorial process was fun for Allard began a "love affair" with everyone, thanks to the "rich mothrepresents the first time a photog- the West on one of his first National er lode" of content to choose from in raphy exhibition of this magnitude Geographic assignments as a staff the National Geographic archives,

> "Four other people might have come up on a lot of different things," McNutt said of the collection, "but would have

The oldest image in the collection, a stereograph titled "Mountain of the Holy Cross" by William idea of a multiple exhibit launch over Henry Jackson, was taken 1,500 feet up Notch Mountain in Colorado in 1873. Jackson was the first person to capture the snowy crosslike ridges in the side of the mountain.

The photograph symbolizes early culture. The consortium was the cat- American ideology and a photographer's drive to convey that message. This drive to accurately represent the Western spirit is portrayed al Geographic, Clarkson got access to throughout the exhibit, and visitors will get a sense of what the American West was and what the future holds for its inhabitants.

> "America still has a fascination with the West, the cowboy, the settlers, the history," Clarkson said. "It's the core of what so many Americans love."



Wyoming, 1999: In Norbert Rosing's image, bison — enduring symbols of the American West — roam freely through the Lion Geyser area in Yellowstone, America's first national park.